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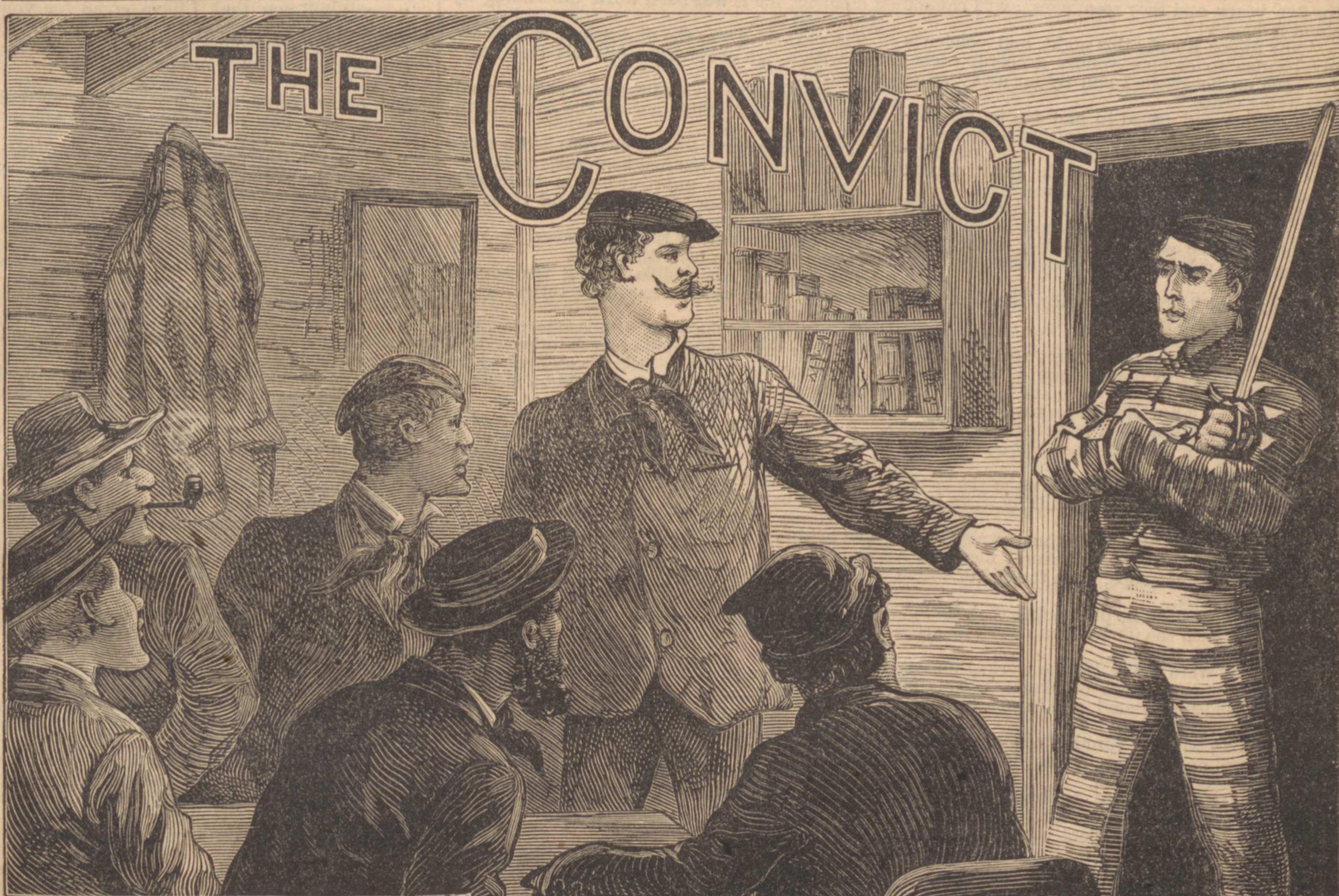
Vol. XXXI.

Published Every
Wednesday.

Beadle & Adams, Publishers,
98 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y., May 5, 1886.

Ten Cents a Copy.
\$5.00 a Year.

No. 393



OR,

The Battles of the Buccaneers.

A Romance of Thrilling Mystery
Afloat and Ashore.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MON-
TEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

CONVICT NUMBER THIRTEEN.

IN the iron-barred window of a large stone structure, overlooking a vast expanse of water that stretched away toward the Atlantic Ocean, a man stood gazing out upon the scene before him.

The structure was a prison—the man was a prisoner.

The view before him was a grand one, of waters dotted with sailing-vessels, villas stretching along the shores, a city in the distance, over which hung a canopy of smoke, and hill and dale beyond to form a background.

It was near the sunset hour, and the man stood plainly revealed, with the rosy tints falling full upon his face and form.



"MAN, CONVICT OR DEMON, WE WILL TAKE THE CHANCES AND GO WITH YOU.
THE VESSEL IS IN YOUR HANDS!"

The Convict Captain.

The latter was tall, commanding, and clad in the striped garb of a convict; the former was clean-shaven, bold, and with the look of one who had sinned and suffered, stamped upon it.

But his eyes were not fixed upon the beautiful scene spread out before him, though all met his vision's scope; but upon a graceful little schooner that was shortening sail as she neared shore, on which stood a handsome house.

Upon the deck of the little vessel, besides half a dozen sailors in blue jackets, white trowsers and red skull-caps, was a happy party of ladies and gentlemen, who had evidently been enjoying an afternoon sail in open water.

There were about a score of them, and the owner of the pleasure craft stood at the helm, clad in the uniform of a naval officer.

Luffing up sharp as he neared the shore, the anchor was let fall, the sails lowered, and a boat, manned by two seamen, started shoreward.

Three trips of the boat carried the party, and they walked toward the handsome mansion surrounded by ornamented grounds, while the two oarsmen returned on board the yacht and joined their comrades.

This was the sight upon which the eyes of the convict were riveted, and, as the increasing twilight began to shut out the vessel from view, he said, in a hushed voice:

"This night I must act, if ever I free myself from these hated walls."

"For life! Great God! I have been here now for five years, and they seem ages, and I cannot stand it longer!"

"No; life or liberty this night, and yonder is my chance to escape—yonder graceful yacht, for once on her decks I can fly far away from this living death."

He turned and paced to and fro in his narrow cell, while the darkness within increased.

Then a sudden light gleamed in the corridor and he knew that before long the guard would make the rounds to see that all was well.

In a few moments more there came the tread of men, and the convict listened as he heard them halt before each cell, the key turn in the lock, and the prisoner within answer to his number.

Then a light flashed in his face, the door was opened, and a stern voice said:

"Number Thirteen!"

"Ay, ay, sir," was the prompt reply, and the iron door banged to, and the guard passed on.

Instantly the prisoner was upon his feet, and he picked up a large Bible from the little table.

It was opened, and then was revealed the fact that the interior had all been cut out, *leaving the edges only*.

This formed a space within, some six inches one way, by eight another, and fully three inches in thickness.

From this secret receptacle thus formed, Convict Number Thirteen took several files, and a coil of slender linen rope, upon the end of which was an iron hook.

The rope and hook he put back in their hiding-place while with the file he began work upon the iron bars of the window.

The bars were thick, but he worked unceasingly, wrapping a piece of blanket about his hands to deaden all sound, and in an hour he had cut one in twain.

The second bar, one running across, was then begun upon, and in the same length of time it, too, had been cut through.

What mattered it that he had blistered his hands, for was he not working for life, a life otherwise doomed to be spent within those stone walls?

Seizing the end of one bar, by main strength he bent it outward, and quickly the other was done likewise and a space amply large enough to allow his body exit was thus obtained.

The slender coil of rope was then placed around his arm so that it would unwrap easily, and one end was made fast to the unfiled iron bars.

He now listened attentively, and he knew all was quiet in the prison, and the hour was approaching midnight.

Through the opening he drew himself and, clinging with one hand, he stood fearlessly gazing down into the darkness beneath.

Then he swung himself off from his dizzy perch, and, with a piece of blanket wrapped about each hand, began the descent.

It was full forty feet to the ground, and he had to pass over three windows below him.

What if other convicts, so haunted by their crimes that they could not sleep, stood at the window, and from spite, at his good fortune, gave the alarm?

He rested an instant upon the first window beneath him, and his eyes glared into a human face.

A convict stood at the window, and Number Thirteen knew him as his bitter foe.

Instantly he had grasped the amazed man by the throat, ere he could realize that the man without was a fellow felon trying to escape.

The window sashes were out, for the weather was warm; only the iron bars were between the two men.

And through those bars Number Thirteen had quickly thrust his powerful arm, and, ere the

one within could draw back he had his throat in an iron grip.

Then the other hand went through, and dragging the convict within the cell up hard against the bars, the desperate man without held him there as though in the clutch of death.

In vain did the one struggle in the grasp of the other, and strive to cry out, to stamp, to give an alarm, and to free himself.

He was powerless, for that steel arm never yielded in a muscle, that vise-like hand held its grip, and the shoeless feet made no sound on the stone floor, while the hands, beating at random in an endeavor to strike the face of his foe, struck the bars oftener, and each time with less force.

At last the struggles grew fainter, then almost ceased, and finally the limp arms hung downward, and Convict Number Thirteen felt that he was holding up a form from which life had almost fled.

So he let go his hold, and as the form fell in a heap upon the stone floor of the cell, he cried:

"Good God! what a fight for life!"

The words fairly burst from his lips as he turned, panting and trembling, and gazed down into the blackness below.

A moment's rest, and then once more he swung himself off from the window-sill and continued his downward course.

In the next cell all was silence, and with a foot-rest for an instant, he went on.

In the third cell he heard the deep breathing of the unhappy man within, and so he remained a moment, for it was hard work descending by that small line.

The next floor was the dining-hall, as he knew, and with a sigh of relief he felt his feet touch the earth.

Reaching up he severed the rope with a small blade, and then glided across the grounds toward the stone wall.

It was very dark, for the heavens had become overcast, and rain was just beginning to fall.

He knew that the guards were in their little boxes at each corner of the wall, and if he escaped there he was free.

Reaching the base of the wall unseen, he looked along the top in both directions.

But no guard was visible pacing the narrow footway on top, the rain having doubtless driven them to shelter.

Then he threw the hook, attached to the other end of the rope, and it fell upon the other side.

Drawing upon it, he felt it catch upon the cornice of the wall, and instantly he began to ascend.

A few vigorous pulls hand over hand and he reached the top, drew himself up, and catching the hook upon the other side, quickly descended.

He was outside of the prison walls, and freedom was before him.

Turning, he shook his clinched fist at the dismal prison, while from his inmost soul broke the words:

"Curses upon you, cruel stones that you are! No longer do you hold me in your iron embrace, for *I am free!*"

CHAPTER II.

THE CONVICT'S STORY.

THE yacht which had attracted the eye of the convict from the windows of his cell was an exceedingly pretty craft, of about thirty tons burden.

A seaman would be attracted to her from her shape, build, and the indications she possessed of being not only a fleet craft, but one that would stand up well in a gale and ride easily in very heavy seas.

Her bulwarks were exceedingly high for a vessel of her tonnage, especially forward, and she had masts that went far aloft and spars that stretched out a long way, so that a vast quantity of sail could be spread.

A small brass gun, mounted on a pivot, was on the forecastle, and its mate was aft.

Her crew consisted of a sailing-master, four seamen, and a sixth man who did duty as cook and steward.

The furnishings of the cabin were elegant, and there were accommodations for half a dozen people.

In spite of her two guns, it was very evident that she was the pleasure-craft of some young man who spent his leisure sailing along the coast with a few boon companions as guests.

Her crew were an able set of fellows, and as soon as night came on with rain, knowing that their vessel was anchored out of danger of being run down by a passing vessel, they made all snug to meet a storm, and went below decks to enjoy themselves at a game of cards.

The men's quarters were also comfortable, and around a table, under a swinging lamp, they took no heed of passing time, as first fortune came to one and then the other, for they were playing for gold.

The smoke of their pipes formed a mist about them, the rain pattered on the deck overhead, and the yacht rocked lightly on the waves.

"A good-evening to you, lads!"

Had the yacht suddenly sunk, it could not have startled the six men more than did the deep voice that fell upon their ears.

Turning in horror, they beheld, standing in the gangway door, a tall form in the garb of a convict.

He it was who had addressed them, and he held in his right hand a cutlass, which he had evidently picked up in the cabin, as he came through, while in his left was a pistol.

The convict was dripping wet, and his manner notwithstanding his pleasant greeting was threatening, his face being calm and stern.

"Who are you, man?"

It was the sailing-master who spoke, and his voice was quivering with fear, for an apparition from the grave could not have alarmed them more than this tall, commanding form in the garb of a condemned criminal.

"A convict!"

The words were hissed through the shut teeth, and the eyes of the speaker blazed as he answered.

There was not one who heard him that dared make further query.

The thoughts were flashing through their minds of how he had gotten there, why he had come, was he alone, and what would be the end of it all; but not one of them asked one of the questions.

Then came a pause that was most painful to those six seamen, and yet it was a silence that they would not break.

So they sat, awed, fearing, waiting for the convict to speak.

At last he said, in that same deep, commanding voice:

"Lads, you would ask why I am here?"

"I will tell you that I have come for your good, as well as my own."

"You will listen to my story, will you not?"

One or two answered in husky tones:

"Yes."

The others could not force words from their throats and so bowed their heads in the affirmative.

"When the sun was near the horizon, from my cell in the prison, which you all know stands a few cable-lengths distant, I saw this yacht run in here to her present anchorage.

"I beheld her pleasant party go ashore to the handsome villa, which stands so near the stone hell wherein I have existed for the past few years.

"I had the means near me to escape, brought me by one who has been my friend, in the disguise of my mother's Bible, which the chaplain said I might have in my cell.

"A few files, a rope, an iron hook, were the means of escape, and a brave heart carried them into successful use.

"I left my cell by way of the window, and resting on a window beneath, I came face to face with one who would have betrayed me, fellow-convict though he was.

"But life was dear to me, and I would have killed an angel had he barred my way to freedom.

"I killed my fellow-convict, clinging to him through the window's iron bars until he was dead.

"I reached the ground, crossed the yard, with the aid of my iron hook and rope, scaled the wall, and springing into the waters struck out for this yacht.

"The waves were rough, the rain pelted mercilessly down upon me, but for liberty I swam, guided by the lantern in your rigging, to me a beacon light of life.

"I reached the deck, found the cabin companionway unlocked, entered the cabin, discovered there these weapons, and, hearing voices, came here to find that I have six to one against me.

"But I am not dismayed, for I am a convict fighting for life!"

"Three years ago I was captured on a pirate deck, and my captors would not believe my story that I was the pirates' prisoner; while the outlaws, having to suffer themselves, swore I too was guilty, and I was sent to prison for life.

"But, mark me: I learned a secret on that pirate vessel, and I will share it with you, for it is of a hidden treasure.

"Are you listening, mates?"

Again were their answers and nods in the affirmative, while, the spell being broken by the question, the men gave a quick sigh of relief.

"I learned a secret of where lay an island among the Bahamas, whereon was hidden a pirate treasure, for a buccaneer craft had gone ashore there one night of storm, and few only survived the wreck.

"Those few saved the treasure, buried it securely, and made their escape in one of the vessel's boats which had not been dashed to pieces.

"The men who know the secret have been captured and hanged, or are in prison, with one exception.

"I am that exception."

He paused, to note the effects of his words, and the men sat with their eyes fixed upon him, as though under a spell of fascination they could not resist.

Then he resumed:

"I am a sailor; I know the island, and I can find the hidden treasure, and it would enrich us all, for there is a million in gold, silver and jewels lying there awaiting our coming.

"This is my story, lads—this my secret, and

I have come to you to bid you go with me there and claim those riches.

"You are but poor seamen, now, with but a few dollars to jingle together in your pockets—why, here on your table to gamble for, you have not a hundred dollars all told, and, by simply going with me, you can each gain a hundred thousand dollars."

"If you care not to keep the yacht, you can ease your consciences by bringing her back to her owner, and leaving her at anchor some dark night."

"Men, what say you, will you go with me as your captain, spread sail at once, and find your fortunes on that island where lies the pirate's treasure, or will you be slaves, poor and wretched, the rest of your lives?"

"I await your response, lads."

He folded his arms calmly upon his broad breast, and his dark, piercing eyes seemed to be resting upon every face.

A moment of silence, while the young sailing-master glanced upon the face of each one of his men, and what he read there caused him to spring to his feet and say:

"Man, convict or demon, we will take the chances and go with you."

"The vessel is in your hands!"

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE COMPACT.

STILL standing upon the bold coast of Maine is a large stone mansion, that is now little more than a monument of its former grandeur, in the early days of the present century.

Then, it was a lordly homestead, surrounded by a vast domain, while its tenants composed almost a small village, and its master lived like a noble, as indeed he was, so rumor said, and one who had had to fly from France to save his life for having conspired against his king.

Instead of seeking a home upon the sunny Southern shores, as he intended to have done, he had been governed by superstition through his vessel having been driven one night of storm safely into a haven which it took the most skillful pilot to carry a craft into, through the dangerous channel.

Considering this a good omen, he had at once determined to make his home upon those rugged shores.

Though an exile, he had come in his own vessel, and brought with him household goods of vast value, and all that went to make life comfortable, nay luxurious, in the New World.

Dwelling on board his vessel, he had at once sent to Portland for skilled workmen, and, having purchased a vast domain, extending for several miles along the coast, and as many inland, he selected a charming spot upon which to erect his mansion.

It was in the early springtime when the foundation was laid; but so liberally did he expend his gold, that a small army of workmen were employed, and ere the first chilling blasts of winter came, the mansion was complete, and it looked almost like a castle of old, with its towers and wings.

Then there were equally solid outbuildings near, and, over in a vale, sheltered from the north winds, was a little village, a score or more of houses, the houses of the farm laborers and their families, for there were many acres to till in seed-time, much grain to gather in harvest time, and afterward the men were wont to take themselves to sea as sailors upon the coasters between the cities and small seaports.

When his superb furniture had been transferred from the large barque to the mansion, and the exile felt that he was at last settled, he went on board the vessel one morning and was met at the side by the sailing-master, a tall, handsome man, with a stern, darkly-bronzed face, and the bearing of one who had been well born.

"Captain Duluth, I have come on board to thank you for your valuable services, pay you your charter money, and bid you farewell," said the exile, addressing the captain of the barque which had brought him to America.

"Your thanking me, Don Brandon—"

"Great God! Why do you call me by that name?"

The face of the exile was livid, and he stared upon the captain in a strange, frightened way.

"Be careful, senor, for the crew have eyes, and ears, too; let us go into the cabin," and Captain Duluth bowed politely and led the way.

White-faced and quivering, the exile followed him, and dropped into the seat the sailor motioned to him to take, while, summoning up courage, he asked sternly:

"May I ask, sir, why you called me by other name than that which I bear of Leon Delorme?"

The sailor calmly took his seat ere he replied, and leaning forward, with one arm upon his knee, answered in a low, quiet tone:

"I called you by a name that I knew you under years ago, senor, for then you were a Spaniard, not an exiled French noble."

"I have a good memory, senor, and I knew you the moment you came to the office in Liverpool and said that you wished to charter a large vessel to carry your household goods to America."

"You said your own vessel, a brig, was in

bad condition, and that you had started in her and put back.

"Accident took me into that shipping-office that day, and good fortune brought me face to face with you."

"I paid the shipping-merchant a round sum to be allowed to take the charter off of his hands, and so you sailed with me, and even yet you do not know me."

"No! in the name of Heaven, who are you?" gasped the man.

"It matters not; if you fail to recall me, so much the better for me."

"But I remember you, and when I knew that you determined to seek a home upon the South Carolina coast, I brought you here, for your coming into this harbor that night of storm was no accident, but design."

"You will remember that I stood at the helm until the lee of an island was reached, where we dropped anchor and rode out the storm."

"I knew your superstition would cause you to settle here, and it is better so; and, knowing well these waters, I brought you here."

"Who are you, and what am I to you?" and the voice of Leon Delorme was hoarse with emotion.

"I am Captain Duluth of the barque Queen, and furthermore, Count Leon Delorme, I am a suitor for the hand of your daughter."

The man addressed was upon his feet in an instant, his face now flushed and his eyes flashing in anger, while he said in a low, earnest tone:

"You, a suitor for my daughter?"

"Yes, my dear count, for not only did I love her at first sight, when she came on board this barque, when we made the transfer of cargo from your brig, but, since the night she was swept overboard on the heart of a wave, and I sprung into the sea and saved her, she has been the idol of my worship."

"Silence, sir! she is but a child, and were it otherwise you are not her equal," was the angry retort.

"She is sixteen, senor, and old enough to love."

"Ha! have you dared address words of love to her?"

"I have told her of my love, and asked for her love in return."

"And her answer?"

"She knew not her heart and bade me wait until she was older, until she was eighteen, and I told her I would grant her request."

"But I have told her of my love, and I now ask you to pledge me her hand, if I can win her affection two years hence?"

"Never, sir! You are but a captain in the merchant service of England, while I am a nobleman of France, and my daughter is therefore well born."

"Also she is beautiful, accomplished and the only heiress of my vast wealth."

"I know, Don Brandon, just what you are."

"You are a noble, yes, your daughter is a lady born, and your wealth is vast, in fact you count your dollars by millions; but I am a man, a gentleman, and a sailor, and I love your daughter, and I ask her of you, when she shall have reached her eighteenth birthday."

The exile laughed sarcastically, while he said:

"I give my consent upon one condition."

"Name it, senor."

"That you match her inheritance with an equal sum."

"Will you be good enough, senor, to name the amount of money I am to match?" was the quiet reply.

"Two million dollars, we will call it," was the sneering rejoinder.

"Draw up a contract, senor, to that effect."

"Why do you wish it?"

"To make your pledge good, senor; there are writing materials."

The exile turned to the table and wrote as follows:

"I, Leon, Count of Delorme, France, do hereby agree to bestow my daughter, Queen, in marriage, upon Bianca Duluth, a captain in the English merchant service, when he shall be able to match her fortune with his own, said fortune to amount to two million dollars, American money, and the limit of this contract to be four years from date, October 1st, 18—.

LEON, COUNT OF DELORME."

"Is that satisfactory, Captain Duluth?" sneered the count, handing the paper to the sailor.

"It is, sir, and now I will say farewell, not that I wish to hurry you away, senor, but I am anxious to begin to make my fortune."

"One moment, sir."

"Yes, Count Delorme?"

"Have we not met before?"

"We have, senor?"

"When and where?"

"I will tell you, senor, the day your daughter becomes my wife."

"Not before?"

"No, count."

"As you please, and now I will say farewell, with the hope that we may never meet again."

"We will meet again, Count Delorme; so I bid you *au revoir*, and kindly present to Mademoiselle Queen my adieu."

The count bowed, and Captain Duluth escorted him to his boat.

Then, as he waved his hand in farewell, his

voice rung out in his orders to his crew to get up the anchor and set sail.

"But we have no pilot on board, sir!" cried the first mate.

"I am aware of that, Mr. Bronx; but I will take the wheel," and, to the amazement of his crew, and in proof of his words to Count Delorme, the daring young captain sent his vessel plying through the dangerous channel leading out to sea, and, standing upon the cliff with his beautiful daughter, the exile saw the barque reach blue water in safety, and speed away on a course due south.

"The wind is fair to lay his course across to England, so why does he head south?" muttered the exile, and turning to his daughter, he asked:

"Queen, you are but a child in years, but may I ask if you love that man?"

"Captain Duluth, father?"

"Yes."

"He saved my life, father; but I do not love him; he fascinates me, and *I fear him*," was the frank response of the young girl.

CHAPTER IV.

RECOGNIZING A PIRATE.

THE barque Queen was an excellent craft, and she had done her work well in transporting the exile, his daughter, his household goods and servants to the shores of America.

As Captain Duluth had told Count Delorme, he had bought the price of charter for a large sum, having been in the shipping-office when the count came in to get a vessel.

He had secured the barque, gotten a good crew, and showed no surprise that the vessel had sailed in ballast, and reaching a certain secluded harbor on the French coast, had found there a large schooner, on board of which was the cargo consisting of the count's effects.

His daughter, a beautiful girl of fifteen, had sailed with the count in the barque, when she left Liverpool, and the transfer being made, the vessel headed for America, and that night of storm was driven, as all supposed, excepting her handsome young captain, into that haven on the coast of Maine.

That he was sailing with a man who had paid a large sum to the shipping-merchant to allow him to take the barque, the count little dreamed of, any more than he did that he had before met the young captain; but both were true, and the mystery the exile could not solve.

Upon reaching a good offing, Captain Duluth had headed southward with a distinct purpose in view.

Having discharged his cargo, he had put aboard stone ballast, though the count had suggested it as a good idea for him to sail for Boston or New York and find a good freight to carry back to England.

Knowing that their captain had declined to do this, they were a little surprised when he headed the barque due south.

But Captain Duluth was not a man to take his men into his confidence, and so paced the quarter-deck, as the vessel sped along, with the air of one who knew his own business and kept his own counsel.

During the night and the next day the barque held on her course.

She had passed Portland before dawn, and, bowing along under a ten-knot breeze, with the wind fair, she left Cape Cod far to the starboard before sunset of the following day.

As she did not round Nantucket, to head into Long Island Sound, the crew came to the conclusion that their captain was going to seek New York Harbor by the ocean course, *via* Sandy Hook; but just as the sun disappeared below the horizon, the lookout sung out, in a quick manner, as though himself surprised:

"Sail ho!"

"Whereaway, my man?" cried the mate, who was holding the deck.

"Off our starboard quarter, just running out from the shelter of the island."

"Ay, ay; it is an American cruiser, doubtless, from the locality she is in," answered the mate, and he turned his glass upon the vessel, upon which the last rays of the sunset fell, revealing her distinctly, for she was not more than a league distant.

Just then Captain Duluth came on deck, and with the air of a thorough seaman cast his eyes out over the waters, then at the skies, and next upon the strange sail:

"Your glass, please, Bronx," he said quickly, as he saw the stranger.

It was handed to him, and he looked an instant only upon the sail, when he said, quickly:

"Mr. Bronx, that is not an American cruiser; but a pirate schooner that I have seen a score of times when in other vessels."

"He is a cruel fellow, has a fleet craft, and, fast as our barque is, our only chance to escape from him is the storm that is rising, and which must break in a couple of hours."

"Ho, lads! put the barque under every stitch that it can draw, for yonder craft is a pirate, as I have before had reason to know."

The voice of their captain caused the crew to spring to work with a will, and up went the canvas, and gracefully the barque bent to the extra pressure, as she went driving along over the darkening sea.

The Convict Captain.

But the schooner had not been idle, and had set all of her canvas, and, standing up well under it, she came rushing along in chase.

"She is a fleet one, sir," said Mate Bronx, as he noted the fact that the schooner was gaining.

"Yes, but we will soon have it pretty black with the rising storm, and may dodge him; but if not, I hardly believe in a gale he can hold his own with us through a rough sea."

"It would seem not, sir; but you know him, you say?"

"Yes, for I have seen much sea service on the American coast, from Maine to the West Indies, and he has chased other vessels that I have sailed in."

"You have heard of Caspar, the Coast Corsair?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is his schooner, and he is a cruel wretch so we must not be taken."

"If we can outsail him."

"If not, we must fight him," was the determined reply.

The heavens were now becoming overcast with clouds that shut out the stars, and the wind was each moment growing stronger, which sent the barque flying along, a great white bone in her teeth as she parted the waters.

The schooner still rushed on in chase, and steadily gained, it was evident to all eyes.

As was the custom in those days, the barque was armed with several small cannon, and had also boarding-pikes, a score of muskets, cutlasses and pistols, while her crew numbered, all told, twenty-one.

With this armament and limited force, Captain Duluth began preparations to resist a vessel, evidently heavily armed, and with a crew of four-score.

He determined to try and gain an advantage by strategy, and made his arrangements accordingly.

Soon, however, the storm broke upon them, and sail on the barque had to be greatly shortened, while in the driving mist the captain at once changed his course, putting away directly before the gale, to elude the pursuer while hidden from his view by the driving spray of the tempest.

An hour did the gallant barque drive on, the seas rushing wildly about her, the wind howling through the rigging, and the few sails set as flat and hard as a board.

Then the tempest swept on, the winds ceased their violence, the clouds disappeared from the skies, and the moon, which had risen, poured its silvery light down upon the restless waters.

"Sail, ho!"

The words broke from the captain's lips, for his eyes had been the first to fall upon the vessel near them.

"The pirate!" cried the crew in chorus.

"Yes, it is the schooner, and we failed to shake her off!"

"All hands to make sail!" and in obedience to the order of their captain, and realizing their own danger the crew of the schooner sprung to work in earnest.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLACK HERMIT.

A SMALL vessel was driving along over a sea white with foam, and waves were threatening to engulf it each moment, as staggering, reeling, bounding, it was held on its course.

It was a craft of only thirty tons, strangely small to be out in such a mad tempest, and but half a score of human beings were visible upon her decks.

Two of these clung to the tiller, to hold her on her course, one a giant negro, the other a white man.

Forward the crew crouched, lashed to the mast, for the waves swept the decks in torrents.

Suddenly there came a glare of vivid lightning, and the white man at the helm shouted in a voice that rung above the storm:

"Breakers ahead! Hard! hard! down your helm!"

He obeyed his own order, as did the negro at his side, and the bows of the sloop were sweeping around when, with a terrific crash, the little vessel was hurled upon a reef.

In an instant her mast went down, her bowsprit was torn off, the bulwarks were stove in and the crew were hurled off into the foam-lashed waters.

The vivid flashes of the lightning revealed an island a cable's length away, upon which the eyes of the strugglers for life were fixed, the vessel having evidently lodged upon an outer reef.

It was rugged, desolate and forbidding, but it was a chance for life, and all struggled hard to reach the goal.

Tossed here and there upon the rocks, several of the crew lost their lives, while others, more fortunate, were able to find a landing-place, and worn out with their efforts, to crawl quickly beyond the reach of the mad waves, and there sink down to rest.

For a long time no one spoke, and then the man who had controlled the destinies of the yacht, he who had been at the helm with the huge African, cast his eyes over the little group, and counting them, said:

"Six of us have been saved, and five are dead, my black slave being lost, strange to say, for he could swim like a fish."

"What, Anchor, you here?" and his eyes fell upon a slender form near him.

"Yes, Senor Captain; I swam in your wake and landed near you," was the response, in a boyish voice.

"Well, lads, our sloop is lost, and the treasure we had on board and were so anxious to hide upon one of the islands of the Bahamas, is hidden in earnest, for it is at the bottom of the sea, and Heaven only knows how we are to get away from this barren rock, for it seems scarcely more."

"Come, let us see where we are."

The men arose in obedience to their captain, and followed him up the hill toward the interior of the island.

A short walk revealed the fact that the interior of the island was not as desolate as they had feared, for they came to a clump of trees, and, exhausted, they threw themselves once more down to rest, and soon all appeared to sleep.

But the captain arose quietly, glanced at his sleeping men, and then slipped noiselessly away.

He walked back toward the shore.

As he reached a spot where the waves broke at his feet he started, as he beheld a huge form suddenly rise from the sea.

"What ho! it is you, Congo?" he cried, as he recognized the African who had stood with him at the helm of the ill-fated sloop.

"Yes, master; I was thrown into the cabin when the sloop struck, and when I came on deck all of you had been washed overboard," was the answer of the negro.

"I wondered why you had drowned, for I so believed; but do you just come from the sloop?"

"Yes, master."

"And she is not in pieces?"

"Her hull is as firm as a rock, though the seas break over her; but she is firmly set upon a reef."

"And the treasure?" quickly cried the captain.

"Is safe, sir, for if the hull goes to pieces, the weight of the boxes of gold will keep them upon the reef."

"Then, all is not lost; and, Congo!"

"Yes, master."

"I see a way to get all of this treasure for ourselves."

"Yes, master."

"This is the very island I was heading for, and intending to hide our treasure, though I had no idea we were in a dozen leagues of it, when we struck."

"I passed several months here once, in fitting out my vessel, and there is a good cabin over in the center of the island, and we left a large yawl here too, which we can now depart in, all but you, Congo."

"Master."

"Yes, Congo, I wish you to remain here on this island?"

"Alone, master?"

"Yes, Congo, and I desire that the men with me believe the treasure lost, and will sail with them in the morning, while you can keep hidden from view."

"The reef on which the sloop struck is all exposed at low tide, and you can walk dry-footed out to it from here, so the treasure will be safe, and you can gather it together after we are gone."

"When will my master return?" asked Congo calmly.

"Within a year if possible, or as soon after as I can."

"I obey my master's commands."

"I felt that you would, Congo, and, for your long stay here as a hermit, I will repay you well some day, for we will yet live as grandly as a king, when I get my hidden treasures together."

"Now hide away somewhere, good Congo, and I will return to my men, and in the morning depart."

He held forth his hand and the African grasped it, raised it to his lips, as he bent in respectful manner, and turning, walked away.

Returning to the spot where he had left his men, the captain found them still sleeping, so once more he silently stole away, but at dawn he came back and aroused them, and a search of the island was begun.

It contained half a hundred acres, was surrounded by ragged reefs, and from the sea seemed utterly barren and inhospitable.

But in the interior there was a rich vegetation, and the cabin of which the captain had spoken was found, built of the wreckage of vessels.

Tied to the shore of a penetrating arm of the sea, the yawl was discovered, and, to the joy of all, it was found to be in good condition.

While the men were making these discoveries, the boy, Anchor, a handsome lad of sixteen, had gone to look at the scene of wreck, and reported that the sloop had gone to pieces.

"Men, to stay here is to starve, and with nothing to eat, the sooner we depart the better for us."

"This boat will bear us away from here and we will sail at once, and by to-morrow should

reach Nassau, from whence we can go where we would.

"Fortunately I have a number of precious gems in my pocket, and we will be able to each get from their sale a few hundreds in money, so we are not so bad off as we might have been."

So said the captain, and the shipwrecked crew could but consent, and, with a last look to see if the sloop and treasure were a total loss, they boarded the large yawl, its sail was spread, and, hungry, wretched, bemoaning the loss of their treasure, they sailed away from the island, little dreaming that an act of treachery had been perpetrated and that behind them they were leaving one of their fellows, poor Congo, the African, doomed to remain there as the Black Hermit of the Isle.

And the African, thus left upon the barren island, crouched in a hiding-place among the rocks, and gazed after the receding boat.

Suddenly he sprung to his feet, and stretching forth his arms toward the receding yawl, he cried in deep, quivering tones:

"Left alone! perhaps to die! perhaps to live, for months, for years, waiting, watching, hoping!"

"Who can tell what the end will be?"

CHAPTER VI.

A FATAL SECRET.

THE man who sat at the tiller of the yawl, which had sailed away from the island among the Bahamas, leaving upon it Congo, the African, had a face that would not go unmarked in any gathering of men.

It was a face to see once, and remember; a face full of power, and every feature stamped with boldness, decision, and resolution; but yet a face to awe rather than admire.

He had, from a purpose which the story will develop in good time, sailed for that desolate island among the Bahama group, to hide away a vast treasure, until some future time when it could be made available.

He was not alone in the enterprise, and yet the temptation was so great to possess all, that he was determined not to resist it.

He had allies, men of his own race, and the giant negro Congo, and the reader has seen how the latter obeyed his simple bidding, and remained alone upon the island.

Having seen that his wearied comrades still slept, the captain had once more returned to the shore, and, signaling for the African, the two had held long converse together.

Then, when the dawn had come, the men little dreamed that their leader had done aught else than remain there, where he had thrown himself during the hours of the night.

Realizing fully that remaining there meant starvation, and anxious to seek safety in flight, the men gladly contented themselves in the yawl, and their destiny under the leadership of one whom they dared not disobey.

Away then sailed the yawl, dropping the island astern, and leaving upon it the lonely Black Hermit, who had obeyed his master's command without a murmur.

They had not seen his huge form crouching among the rocks, gazing after the receding boat; nor had they seen him spring to his feet, and stretch forth his hands in agony of spirit at being deserted by his fellow-men.

So on the yawl sailed, the stern, silent commander at the tiller.

It was a good sea boat, broad of beam, and roomy, a slow sailer, but one to depend upon in rough weather.

The sea yet ran rough, and the wind was fresh, but the boat stood up well and cast the miles astern, as the hours went by.

There was no compass on board, only the skill of her commander, and his pluck, to find a port of safety.

The men scattered themselves about in the yawl, where they would be most comfortable, while in the stern sat the boy, Anchor, his eyes watching the land as it gradually faded from sight.

A small keg of water they had brought with them, filling it at the spring on the island, and this was all they had.

Not a mouthful of food, not a blanket, nothing to sustain life or keep warmth in the body other than the keg of water, which allowed a quart to each man.

Thus, across the waters they sailed, longing for the day to come to an end, and feeling that it would bring them that much nearer to their destination.

Other islands were sighted and passed, but bleak and barren, no one cared to stop on them, as there could no succor be found there.

So on the yawl went, and at last the sun drew near the western horizon, and hope grew higher in the hearts of those on board.

Still silent, stern, untiring, the captain sat at the tiller, his lips parting as twilight crept over the waters, to say:

"We are going to have a blow."

The men had noted the gathering clouds, and feared a storm, and now they felt their dread was to be realized, as they knew that the man at the tiller seldom erred in his predictions of the weather.

They had confidence in his ability to save

them, even though their boat was small, and they were in dangerous waters.

At last the predictions of the helmsman began to be verified, for the wind blew stronger and stronger, and the sea began to run high.

"We must land on yonder island, for we dare not go on at night in these dangerous waters," said the helmsman, and he nodded toward a small island that loomed up off of their starboard bow.

It seemed but a huge rock, and yet it was a place of safety for the night.

Approaching the island under the lee, the boy, who stood up in the stern, suddenly sighted a small cove, and called out:

"There is a haven for the boat, sir; it is two points off your port bow."

"Ay, ay," came in the deep tones of the helmsman, and, with the sail shivering, he headed for the little inlet.

Into it the yawl glided with safety, the boy sprang ashore, and the men followed.

The storm was increasing in violence, and the two men dropped an anchor fore and aft, so that the yawl would ride in safety; and springing overboard they swam the few yards to the shore and followed their comrades up among the rocks to shelter.

Wet, hungry, upon merely a rock and sand island, the poor fellows were in a pitiable condition; but they huddled together in a crevice of the rocks, to shelter themselves from the storm as best they could, and await the coming of day, when they could once more go on their course.

Whether he dropped off to sleep or not, the chief seemed not to know; but he started up suddenly, and saw that his men were sleeping.

The winds had ceased their mad skurrying over the rocks, and the stars were shining overhead.

"I must have been asleep, and yet I did not seem to sleep; but hours have certainly passed since I threw myself down here to rest."

So the man muttered, and rising noiselessly, he glided away from the spot where his comrades still slumbered.

His steps led him to the top of the island, and then he made a hasty circuit of it.

"Barren as a desert, and, if I remember aright, not another bit of land within leagues.

"This will do; it is better than taking other chances."

So he said half-aloud, and, as though having made up his mind to some course, he walked around the shore of the isle, until he came to the little cove where the yawl had been anchored.

It had ridden out the storm well, anchored fore and aft as it was, and walking into the water he swam out to it with a few vigorous strokes.

To clamber on board was but the work of an instant, and then he drew up the bow anchor and noiselessly placed it on board.

The anchor over the stern followed, and then, seizing an oar he noiselessly paddled out of the cove.

Once in open water he raised the sail, the blocks creaking ominously as he did so.

Then, as he sprang to the tiller, and catching the wind in the sail headed away from the island there came from the shore a wild wail, mingled with groans.

"Ha! the creaking blocks aroused them, and they know I have deserted them.

"But I am safe, and they are doomed.

"Thirty-six hours already they have gone without food, and there on that desolate rock they can not live much longer."

So said the cruel man, and he grimly looked back toward the island, where dimly seen the wretches he had deserted were shrieking for help, and imploring him to come back to them.

In stern silence he sailed on, a bitter curse rising to his lips, as their continued cries appealed to him, and burying his face upon his arm, he tried to cover his ears to shut out the appalling sound.

As he did so a slender form crept from under the deck forward and started toward him.

It might have been that the sail fluttered, that a movement of the one creeping toward him rocked the boat and caused him to raise his head suddenly.

As he did so a cry broke from his lips, for he beheld, almost upon him, the boy, Anchor, and a knife gleamed in the uplifted right hand.

"Put back for those men you have cruelly deserted, or I will kill you," hissed the boy as he sprung upon the seat nearest the helmsman and gazed down upon him.

It was a bold, noble thing for the boy to do, to attempt to save the men, left on the island to die, and to dare one whom his crew feared as they did Satan.

And the brave boy meant all that he said, and he was preparing to spring upon the helmsman like a tiger, unless he obeyed.

For a moment it seemed as though the man was armed, that, unarmed as he was he knew the boy held him at his mercy.

Then he said:

"Anchor, you are as big a fool as those howling idiots, for I could not sleep and am simply sailing about because I had either to act, or go mad."

"Put up that knife, Anchor, and though I ap-

preciate your good intention to serve your comrades, as you believe, never draw a blade on me again."

The boy instantly lowered the knife, and, as he did so, the long, slender tiller was snatched out of its socket in the rudder port, and sweeping through the air dealt a blow upon the head of the youth that dropped him like dead in the bottom of the boat.

A cruel laugh broke from the lips of the man, and he quickly readjusted the tiller and put the yawl on her course once more.

For a long time the cries of the deserted crew rung in the ears of the man who was leaving them to their doom, and then he sailed out of hearing.

Then the dawn came, and he saw that the boy was not dead, as he had supposed, but lay in the boat, calmly looking at him.

The tiller had cut a gash in the scalp, and stunned him but a few moments, yet the injury was not severe.

"Boy, I was in hopes I had killed you," said the man.

"You were mistaken, señor, as you see, for I have a hard head," was the calm reply of the youth.

"It had been better for you had the blow caused your death."

"Do you mean to kill me, señor?"

"I mean to let you die," was the stern response.

The boy's face never changed a muscle, and his eyes looked straight into those of the cruel man at the tiller, who now kept his gaze ahead, and upon the yawl, as though dreading to meet that earnest look he *felt*, though he did not see.

CHAPTER VII.

RETRIBUTION.

THE man who had so coolly deserted five of his fellow-beings upon that dread island, knowing that a few hours must seal their doom, fairly seemed uncomfortable in the presence of the boy.

The latter had not touched his knife, for it lay near the feet of the man, where it had fallen, and if he saw it he did not show a desire to grasp it.

A boy, though agile and full of nerve, he yet was no match for that man with his great strength and broad shoulders.

And yet the man seemed cowed under the stare that was upon him.

He glanced at the sea ahead, then at the behavior of the boat, the sail, and then astern at the island, but not once at the one who so fixedly gazed upon him.

The island was now far distant, and the yawl was dropping it below the horizon; but in that look which he gave astern, the helmsman saw the five men grouped together, their bloodshot eyes fixed upon the rapidly disappearing boat, and hope dying out in their hearts as it became dimmer and dimmer in the distance.

Ahead of the yawl, yet a couple of leagues away, was another island.

It was not as large as the one upon which the men had been left, and it was, if anything, more dreary and barren.

Toward this the helmsman headed, and the youth lay in the bottom of the boat, watching him.

Miles were passed over, and yet the black eyes rested upon the face of the man.

Under that gaze the nerves of the helmsman twitched, his hand fingered the tiller in an uneasy way, and glancing backward he saw that the island had been dropped out of sight, and no longer were the pleading men visible to him.

Then he bent quickly and seized the boy's knife, from where it lay at his feet.

The act seemed to break the spell under which he was held, for it caused the boy to start and cry out:

"My knife! I thought you already had it, or it had gone overboard when you struck me."

"No, I have it safe; but do not fear, for I shall not use it upon you."

"Yet you intend to kill me?"

"Not in that way," and the man looked forward once more, to see that the island for which he was heading, was but a few cable-lengths away.

Then he arose, released the helm, and said:

"Boy, your accursed eyes almost fascinated, and I seemed powerless; but now I am myself once more, and you too shall perish, for you possess a secret that has proven fatal to your comrades, and it shall to you."

The boy arose as the man spoke, for he saw that he intended to advance upon him and, without waiting an attack he began it, by springing like a tiger upon his foe.

The man was taken by surprise, and the weight of the boy carried him backward in the bottom of the boat.

As he fell the knife flew out of his hand, and this put the two on more equal terms, though still it was man against boy.

"Curse you! I'll have to kill you, boy," cried the man, in a fury, and he grasped the boy's throat; but, in an instant he became cool again, and began to struggle simply for mastery.

His endeavor seemed to be not to hurt his young antagonist, but to weary him out and conquer him.

For a long time the struggle continued, the boy showing a wonderful courage and endurance, and the man finding it hard to master him; but at last the end came, and the youth's arms fell powerless to his sides.

Then the man seized a rope and quickly bound him securely.

The boom, in the mean time, had swung out over the side, and the yawl was at the mercy of the wind and waters.

But quickly the sheet rope was trimmed in, and the boat put on her course for the island.

A landing was made, and making fast, by throwing an anchor ashore, the man raised the boy in his arms and took him out upon the island.

"Ah! you intend to desert me here, as you did my shipmates?" cried the youth.

"I do," was the firm rejoinder.

"Kill me outright, but don't leave me here to starve," was the entreaty.

"No, you attacked me this morning, and again this afternoon, and you have a secret that shall be fatal to you."

"There, release yourself as best you may, and then die of starvation," and without another word he turned away and once more went on board his boat, which he at once shoved off from the island.

As he did so the boy struggled up to his knees, and, in that posture, with his hands tied behind his back; and his ankles bound, gazed after the departing boat.

"Good-by, my lad," called out the man in mocking tones as he sailed away from the island.

"Curses upon you forever for your act of crime toward me."

"May you meet a retribution equal to the punishment you make me suffer!" came in the clear voice of the young victim, and his every word reached the ears of the inhuman being who had condemned him to such a living death.

Once more that strange feeling of awe came over the man, at his diabolical act, and he shut out the sound of the voice from his ears.

Over the waters he sailed, mile after mile, before he had the courage to glance astern of him.

The island was barely in sight, and the form of his victim was no longer visible.

"Great God! I have done a cruel deed to keep the secret I hold alone now—no not alone, for that negro, my slave, possesses it."

"But he is faithful, and I fear him not."

"Now to seek the nearest haven, and the jewels I have will readily bring me gold, and I can go to England and carry out my plans."

"Ha! ha! ha! I will be as rich as a king, with what I have laid away, and that treasure on the island, and gold will drown all remorse, all memory."

"Ha! I believe a storm is coming up."

"How strange, that three evenings in succession we have had a gale."

"And there is no island near, to which I can go for refuge, and this will be a hard boat to manage alone in a blow."

"Good God! how those black clouds roll up above the horizon; they fairly appall me."

"How strange, when never before did I fear wind or wave at sea."

He watched the clouds anxiously, saw them sweep across the heavens, and at last luffed up into the wind and reefed down close.

Then he made all as shipshape as he could, and once more took the tiller, heading the yawl to meet the coming storm.

Hardly had he done so, when the gale broke upon the little boat with fury, nearly swamping it in the chaos of waters, and driving her before it with frightful velocity.

Increasing in violence, the sail was torn from its fastenings, and went flying away like a huge bird driven before the tempest.

All that the man could do was to crouch at the helm and hold on, while he glanced about him at the appalling scene.

Darkness coming on, the sea and heavens became more fearful to behold, and the man, livid in face, with quivering muscles and dread upon his soul, could only crouch down and await his doom.

For hours he drove on, until at last he murmured:

"This tempest is driving me far to the westward, into the Atlantic, and I will be surely lost."

At last the storm died away, the waves ran less high, and with the dawn there was no land in sight.

Almost starving, for it had been over forty-eight hours since he had tasted food, weakened by his struggle for life when wrecked, and then with his victim, he was fast losing his nerve and strength, and he looked with pleading eyes around the watery horizon, longing to see some vessel near.

But not a sail dotted the blue expanse, and hour after hour passed on until noon was told, and the hot sun fell mercilessly down upon him.

Night came, and brought relief from the heat, but he felt that he was starving for food, dying of thirst, and he groaned aloud in his agony.

At last dawn came, and he cried aloud:

"No ship in sight, and I am doomed."

"Oh, God! this is Thy retribution upon me for my many crimes."

As he spoke he sunk down in the bottom of the boat, and unable to move, there he lay through the long weary day of suffering, until night drew near, and with it came a vessel dashing swiftly along over the waves, and so heading that the yawl and its occupant was directly in its course.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONGO, THE HERMIT.

LET US return to the poor African, left as a hermit upon that dreary isle.

There certainly seemed a strange bond between the two, the master and his slave, which could cause the one to obey the other so implicitly, placing his life in danger, and bringing him to such an existence of solitude simply by the mere request that he should do so.

Congo was as black as ink, of a superb stature, for he was over six feet tall, and his shoulders were broad, his arms sinewy, and he stood upright and gracefully, showing wonderful strength by his mere attitude.

He was clad simply in a pair of duck trowsers, a blue woolen shirt, and wore a red *tuque* or skull-cap, which contrasted well with his ebony complexion.

About his waist was a red sash, in place of a belt, and in it was stuck a jewel-hilted knife of rare workmanship.

Around his neck was a necklace of remarkable make-up, for there were gold, silver and copper coins of all the nations of the earth, bones polished to ivory whiteness, and with the look of having been taken from human beings; then there were bear-claws, eagle and vulture talons, rare pebbles and other stones oddly carved while the center piece was a child's skull, white as snow, and with the ends of the necklace strings fastened upon either temple.

Still, with all of this superstitious mummery, Congo showed none of the instincts of a barbarian from the wilds of Africa in his talk and conduct.

He spoke without a dialect, and with only the slightest accent.

His face was massive, his bearing commanding, and every feature was stamped with boldness, intelligence and resolution, while there was nothing of the savage hideousness about his countenance.

When the sloop had dashed upon the surf, and sent the mast overboard, along with her crew, Congo had shown no excitement; but risen calmly from the cabin floor where he had been hurled.

He saw that the wave which had carried the craft upon the reef had been a tremendous one, and had left it there solid as the rock itself, for the waves that were then breaking over the hull did not move it from its position.

He also remembered that, going before the gale, with the sail reefed down, this would add to the hull being thrown further upon the reef, and no other seas would be able to move it.

Having seen that all on board was safe, he closed the companionway, went on deck, and hearing shouts that told the crew had reached the shore, he plunged overboard and followed them.

Directly in front of the hull he saw that the reef ran up in a tower-like shape, and he had to go around this to reach the shore, which he did with little difficulty, meeting there his master, as the reader will remember.

After the short talk with the captain, which resulted in his being told to remain upon the island, Congo hid away until a signal he well knew, told him that his master was near and again wanted him.

Going out of his hiding-place he was told that the crew were still sleeping, and that the bulk must be lightened so that it would come ashore and go to pieces, while the treasure-boxes should be anchored there, with ropes attached and buoys on the end that they might be found readily again.

But Congo told his master that no power could move the wreck, and he led the way out, both swimming against the strong sea.

Reaching the wreck the captain saw the truth of the negro's words, and at the same time the black pointed to the tower-like rock ahead of the sloop's bows, while he said:

"That rock will hide the wreck, master, from the island, unless a thorough search is made, so you better leave early with the men, before they can look around."

"You are right, Congo, and I will do so," and leaving the negro on board the wreck, as the best hiding-place, he sprung into the sea, swam ashore, and hastened back to his sleeping comrades, arriving there just at dawn.

Then it occurred to him that he had left the small bag of provisions which Congo had given him to hide away about his clothing; but it was too late then, and he was forced to go without a morsel to eat.

The reader has seen how the wrecked crew were hurried away from the island, and that they had been prevented, by the point of rocks, from discovering the wrecked hull of their ves-

sel, and left, believing the sloop to have been dashed into a thousand pieces, though they did think it strange that none of the *debris* was along the shore.

From a point of lookout Congo beheld them come to the shore and search for the wreck; then he heard them called away by the captain, and plunging into the sea he swam to the land.

Cautiously he ascended the steep sea-wall of the island, and gazing seaward beheld the yawl swiftly gliding away upon her course, and, brave heart that he had, it trembled with awe at his condition of dreariness and solitude; and he stretched forth his brawny arms and uttered the words that the reader will remember, as he stood gazing after the receding boat.

Until the white sail faded away in the distance the Black Hermit gazed out over the waters, and then he bowed his head and groaned in a deep, quivering voice:

"Gone! gone! gone! Alone! alone! ALONE!"

But for a moment only did the brave black yield to this feeling of utter desolation, almost despair, and then he shook himself, as a wild beast might in his anger, and strode away over the island.

He found that the island was by no means as dreary as he had feared, for there were patches of maize growing, sweet potatoes, orange trees, pineapples, yams, limes and other fruits and vegetables, planted by some one of the crew which had visited there with the captain before.

There were cool springs also, and salt ponds, so that Congo felt he could not starve, and he wondered that the captain had not thoroughly searched the island before leaving, as enough fruit alone could have been obtained to last the boat's crew for weeks.

But away they had hastened, leaving plenty behind, and with starvation before them.

Returning to the side of the island where the sloop had been wrecked, Congo discovered that the sea had run down after the storm so that he could, as the captain had said, walk out to the wreck dry-footed.

Upon the vessel he knew there were ample provisions to last him alone for a year, and, having found a good hiding-place for the treasure, for he knew not but that some vessel might visit it, he slept in comfort that night, feeling more contented with his lot.

But had he known what was before him, the long, long weary years without beholding a human being that must pass, his brave heart would have sunk within him.

But so it was that the time passed by, he counted the months uncomplainingly until a year had been told off.

Then life became a tedious existence of watching, waiting, hoping.

Yet the months went by and marked year after year, and only the glance of a distant sail was now and then seen.

He had ample food, for the island was overgrown now with fruit, vegetables and corn; but still he was alone, desolate, weary, despairing, and over and over again he groaned, as he stood watching the surrounding sea:

"Alas! the boat never reached a haven!"

"My master is dead, and I am left here to die!"

One afternoon he approached his usual place of lookout, and as he threw himself down upon the rocks, he said dejectedly:

"Eight long years, and my master does not return to me."

"I have here the riches of a king; but here I am doomed to die."

"What ho! a sail! a sail!"

He sprung to his feet like one gone mad with joy, as his eyes suddenly fell upon a distant sail.

"He comes! he comes! and I will be free."

"Ahoy, good ship, ahoy!" and his deep voice thundered out over the sea.

Suddenly his face became grave and anxious, and he whispered:

"What if it be not my master?"

"I must be careful, for I guard my master's treasure, and I will be faithful to the trust," and turning, the Black Hermit ran like the wind back to the cabin in the interior of the island, bent on some strange errand to which his duty called him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PIRATE'S VICTIM.

IT WILL be remembered that the barque, Queen, which had been chased by an armed schooner, that Captain Duluth had pronounced to be the craft of a well-known sea outlaw known as Caspar, the Coast Corsair, had failed to dodge the enemy in the darkness and storm, and had discovered him near when the clouds swept by.

Instantly the barque had been crowded with canvas, and went surging along through the rough waters, flying from the little schooner.

In that rough sea, still running wild after the storm, Captain Duluth had hoped that the large hull of the barque would enable him to run away from the schooner, and he determined to risk the fire to do so.

But, though the Queen went bravely on, and forged through the waves, the schooner came steadily on in chase.

It was noted, too, by the anxious crew of the barque, that the little craft was slowly gaining.

She stood well up for the sail she carried, and the brisk wind that still was blowing, and only her tall masts and white canvas could be seen, for the low, sharp hull seemed to be under water.

Her sharp bows fairly parted the waves, and rushed through them, and though her decks were knee-deep in water, and the spray flew half-way up the sails, the crew stood at their posts.

Steadily through the hours of the night the schooner gained, and near dawn she was near enough for the barque to open fire, though the schooner had not fired a shot, seeming to depend wholly upon her speed and being certain of her prey.

Resolved to at last fire upon the schooner, and endeavor to cripple him, as he saw it was but a question of an hour or two more, when the pirate would board the barque, Captain Duluth aimed the small cannon himself and fired.

It was evident from the crash of timbers that the shot had struck hard, and the curses and cries of the pirates showed that they had not expected a surprise.

Seeing that he had gained some advantage, that of the first blow at least, Captain Duluth lost no time in firing again, and almost instantly he was answered by the schooner's bow gun, a heavy piece.

The shot flew wild, however, and Captain Duluth fired again, and this time with grape, and he could see that he had brought down some of the pirates.

The barque was now fairly flying along under all the sail she could carry, and the wind was blowing a brisk seven knots.

The schooner was but a few cable-lengths astern, directly in her wake, and the sea having run down, the decks were not drowned as before, so that the guns could be brought into use.

A few more shots passed between them, the grape of the small cannon on the barque doing great execution among the pirate crew, and the shot of the latter merely cutting through the canvas of the chase.

Seeing, however, that he could not escape, and that the schooner must soon run her sharp bowsprit over the stern of the barque, Captain Duluth determined to use strategy to aid him, hoping at the last to beat the pirates off.

So he waited until the next shot from the schooner came tearing over the barque's deck, and instantly he luffed sharp and lay to, as though to surrender.

A moment more and the schooner came swiftly up, as though to board on the barque's lee, and instantly the two cannon of the merchant craft, double-shotted, were run to one side, and the order given to fire, in Captain Duluth's trumpet-like voice.

At pistol range, and well-aimed, the execution was great, and loud curses and cries arose from the pirate deck, while a commanding voice shouted:

"Lay her aboard! Boarders ahoy!"

"Give it to them again, lads, with the guns, and then seize your muskets!" cried Captain Duluth, and depressing the guns, to reach the schooner's decks, they were again fired, and with deadly result.

"Now to your muskets, men, and after you fire, receive them on the bayonet!" shouted Captain Duluth.

The men obeyed, firing a volley just as the pirates clambered over the barque's sides.

Some dropped back upon the schooner's deck, a few fell upon the bayonet points, but a score gained the deck and a rush cut down the first line of the barque's brave defenders.

"Beat them back, lads, and show no mercy!" shouted Captain Duluth, bringing his cutlass down upon a pirate confronting him.

"They are but a handful, so spare them, men!" cried a clear voice, and a heavily bearded man sprung forward and confronted Captain Duluth.

"You are Caspar, the Corsair?" cried the barque's commander.

"Yes, and you?" was the cool rejoinder.

"Your deadly foe," and Captain Duluth's sword very nearly caught the pirate chief off his guard; but parrying it with a skillful movement, the pirate cried:

"Ah! say you so, my friend? Then let us settle our differences here now, whatever they may be," and calling to his men he continued:

"Throw yourselves upon those few men and disarm them, for we need all the good men we can get."

His words again nearly cost him his life, for Captain Duluth was a superb swordsman; but turning to the work now before him the pirate chief pressed forward with a skill and force which he seemed to think would quickly end the matter.

To his amazement he found himself mistaken, for his adversary handled a blade as he had never met man to confront him before, and in spite of himself he could merely hold his own with his foe.

As though warming with his work, in spite of seeing that the four men left of his crew had surrendered, Captain Duluth began the attack

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more fiercely, and soon sent the blade of the pirate flying from his hand.

"I give you your life, sir," he said quickly, lowering his weapon.

"By Heaven, sir, but it is the first time I have ever had to accept my life at the hands of a foe, or met my superior with a sword, and I give you *your* life," was the response of the pirate chief.

Captain Duluth merely bowed, and the buccaneer continued:

"I feared, when you fired upon me, I had run into a trap and caught an armed vessel; but realizing afterward you were but a merchantman, I kept up the chase; but you have cost me dear, sir, and I had not half my force, having lost many men of late.

"Are these four men all that are left of your crew?"

"Yes."

"Well, they can go aboard the schooner and join my crew, while I will give you the berth of second officer."

"Which I decline to accept, sir."

"Ah! either that or your life."

"If forced to save my life by serving you, I will do so," was the reply.

"Good! now what cargo have you?"

"The barque is in ballast only, and what you gain by your capture is worth nothing."

"That is bad; but I will look over the craft for myself."

This he did, and he found little to transfer to the schooner, so in a rage at his losses of men for no purpose, he ordered the Queen set on fire, and his men to return to the schooner.

The pirates were adepts at this kind of work, and soon the fine barque was one mass of flames, while the schooner moved away over the waters, lighted by the brilliant fire.

But the career of Caspar, the Coast Corsair, was short-lived, as a few days after his vessel was roughly handled in a storm, and, before repairs could be made, an American schooner-of-war, commanded by a dashing young lieutenant, bore down upon her, and after a sharp, short action boarded the pirate and captured her.

In vain was it, when Caspar, the Corsair, and his crew were taken to the nearest port and turned over to the authorities as prisoners, that Captain Duluth pleaded his innocence, saying that he was himself a captive of the pirate chief, for he was not believed, especially when his captors laughed at his assertions, and said that he was equally guilty with them.

Himself a prisoner, and with the gallows staring him in the face, Caspar, the Corsair, was not the man to allow Captain Duluth to escape, when he looked upon his chase of the barque as the cause of his being where the schooner-of-war captured him, and he boldly pronounced the unfortunate captive one of his officers, and alike guilty with himself.

In those days men dwelt not long in trying pirates, and though the story of Bianca Duluth had some weight with the jury, they cared not to make an error, and quickly sentenced the outlaws, the chief to die upon the gallows, along with his officers, excepting Captain Duluth, who, with the buccaneer crew, were sent to prison for life.

"Oh, God! thus am I doomed, and every hope dies within my heart!" groaned the unhappy Duluth, as he was led away to prison.

Touched by the deep anguish of the man, his captor, Henry Harvey, the lieutenant of the schooner-of-war, hearing the remark, said:

"Make out on paper just who you are, what vessel you sailed in, from what port, who were her owners, and all else that will go to prove your innocence, and I will make it my business to see if your statement is true, and if so, will see that you are set at liberty."

Bianca Duluth gazed earnestly into the face of Lieutenant Harvey for an instant, and then, turning deathly pale, he said hoarsely:

"No, no; I cannot do as you ask—I *dare not!* Let me suffer as I am, and go into this living tomb for life, unless—unless—"

"Unless what?" asked Henry Harvey, as Duluth paused, and he was struck with his refusal of his offer and his strange manner, which seemed certainly to indicate guilt.

"Unless *I can make my escape!*" was the fierce response of the young captain, and turning away from the naval officer, he followed his keeper into the prison-walls, and half an hour after was pacing his cell in the garb of a convict.

CHAPTER X.

THE HEIRESS OF CLOUDLAND CASTLE.

THREE years have passed away since Count Leon Delorme settled upon the coast of Maine.

In that time he had improved his handsome mansion until it had become known as the Seaside Palace, and far and wide the owner was looked upon as a lord among men.

He was a stern man, one who seldom bent from his reserve, though he was considered a just one, and many acts of charity he had done for those poor dwellers who needed aid.

His vast estates were well cultivated by scores of laborers, and his people all had comfortable homes and received good wages.

He lived in real grandeur, surrounded by liveried servants, with every luxury about him that gold could buy, and with his beautiful daughter, Queen, the idol, not only of her father's heart, but of all who knew her.

Not a poor hovel within leagues inland, that she had not visited, mounted upon her spirited horse, and attended by two servants, and left joy and comfort behind her.

Not a fisherman's hut was there along the coast for miles, that her little yacht had not landed near, and given aid to those who needed it.

Thus it was that the beautiful young girl had come to be known far and wide as The Angel of the Palace, while to her face she was called Lady Queen.

With a professor to teach her music, another to instruct her in drawing and painting, a governess to improve her in her studies, all dwelling in the mansion until her eighteenth birthday, Queen Delorme had become a most accomplished young lady indeed.

But she was glad to throw off the restraint of study days and art instructions, and saw her preceptors depart without great regret, feeling that they had been well paid for their services, and that she was free to follow the bent of her own wishes, for her father allowed her to do pretty much as she pleased.

Though Count Delorme seldom went upon the sea, except to take a semi-yearly trip to Portland or Boston, he had a large and fine yacht lying at anchor in the snug haven near the mansion, with a keeper on board.

She was always in condition to sail within an hour's notice, as soon as her crew of fishermen could be signaled to come on board.

With his dogs and gun, his horses, and his library the count shared his time, while Queen was ever ready for a sail upon the sea, and knew well the island-dotted waters near the mansion.

She could sail her little yacht as well as any seaman along the coast, rowed a strong and quick stroke, swam like a fish, could bring in her string of game in any morning's jaunt rifle in hand, and rode with wondrous skill and nerve.

In spite of her studies and devotion to music and art she had learned her outdoor lessons well, and her father seemed to be pleased that she was not wholly like a hot-house flower.

Beautiful in face, perfection in form, and the sole heiress of the rich Count Delorme, it was not to be wondered at that Queen Delorme was sought by suitors far and wide.

The fame of her beauty and riches was known in the cities, when she accompanied her father upon his voyages thither, and "Cloudland Castle," as the count had named his home, on account of its lofty situation, overlooking the sea, coast and inland, for leagues, was the resort of visitors who sought to win the hand of the fair young mistress.

Not one, however, seemed to win more than her friendship, and some not even that, though her father seemed to favor a handsome young naval officer of Boston, noted for his good looks, dissipated life and vast fortune.

A man who had broken many hearts, this young aristocrat, Preble Bainbridge, yet failed to make an impression upon Queen, though, in command of a trim brig-of-war, he found it convenient to often cruise along the coast and make a call at Cloudland Castle.

One pleasant afternoon, three years after coming to America, and a couple of months since the governess and tutors had been dismissed, and Queen had escaped, as she expressed it, "out of bondage," Count Leon Delorme was seated in a handsome summer-house that stood on the edge of the cliff, and commanded a fine view of the rugged shores far below, the island, dotted waters, and the rolling sea for leagues.

Suddenly Queen came toward him, dressed in her boating suit, wearing a tarpaulin upon her head, and carrying a leather bag in her hand.

"Father, here is your mail which Sandy just brought from the village, and you can read it while I give you a sail in the bay," she said in a voice strangely winning and musical.

She was very beautiful indeed, as she stood before him, and the count could not but gaze upon her with admiration.

He had not changed in the three years that had gone by, unless his face had grown more stern and hard.

"No, child, I will remain here and look over my mail; but don't go far, for I saw a strange lugger run in under the shelter of the Haunted Island awhile ago."

"I have nothing to fear from her, father; but I am sorry you cannot go."

"Ah! here is a letter from Captain Preble Bainbridge, my child."

"I do not care to hear it read, father."

"Do you not like him?"

"I neither like or dislike him, father."

"He loves you."

"So he told me, sir, when he was last here."

"And your answer?"

"That I did not love him, and never would; but, good-by, father, for awhile," and Queen darted away to the edge of the cliff, and descended a winding stairway which had been

built against the wall of rock to the shore, two hundred feet below.

Reaching the shore she walked out upon a pier, at the end of which was moored a pretty yacht, yet a stanch sea-boat, and which Queen could handle readily without aid.

Quickly she raised the sail, and seated in the stern, her hand upon the carved tiller, she went skimming away over the waters before a light breeze.

She knew the water well, and just where lay danger, and held on her way for a league, rounding a rugged line of reefs, and heading out into the open sea.

Forgetting what her father had said about the strange lugger, she passed beyond the Haunted Island, which, with another isle, guarded the entrance to the bay, and was just about to put back when a sound attracted her attention.

Involuntarily she turned in the direction of Haunted Island, of which strange stories had been told by the people of the coast, and a cry of surprise, mingled with alarm, escaped her lips, as she saw, darting swiftly toward her, a long skiff, urged on by four oarsmen, and with a fifth man at the tiller.

That the skiff had come from the lugger, which she now saw, Queen knew, and that the men in it were a rough, reckless set of men she saw at a glance.

Coming as they did, under the full pressure of the oars, and heading directly toward her, Queen knew that she was the object they sought, and in dismay she put her little boat about and started homeward, though she saw, with increased alarm, that they were rowing faster than she could sail with the light breeze then blowing.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ALARMING APPARITION.

I TRUST that my reader has not forgotten the little yacht which, with its crew of six men, sailed away from its anchorage in the darkness and storm, under the command of a Convict Captain.

Past the city with its twinkling lamps, on through the night, pelted by the pouring rain, wafted by a stiff breeze out of the harbor, dotted with scores of vessels at anchor, their lights as they rode the waves looking like a swarm of fireflies—out into the ocean went the brave craft, that stern, silent man at the helm, still clothed in his convict garb, and the crew standing near, ready to obey his slightest command.

He had tempted them from their duty, and, falling, they had aided a felon to escape, and run off with their employer's yacht.

The glamour of gold before their eyes, as he had pledged them they should have, had led them astray, and they had cast their lives, their destinies into his hands, and grimly stood ready to abide the result.

With the pledges of the Convict verified, they could live where they willed, for with riches, they could snap their fingers at the world; but with the pledges unfulfilled they must then become as hunted men, even upon whom dishonor had fallen heavily.

Hoping, they trusted the Convict, and so out upon the waters they sailed that night of storm.

Weeks passed away and at last there came one afternoon the cry from the lookout:

"Land ho!"

The cunning Convict had headed far out to sea, where no vessel's track would be passed in his southward run, and, leaving the Bermuda Isle upon his starboard he had still held on in his southward course.

Never before had the little yacht been one-third that distance from the land, and the crew shook their heads ominously, as they thought of a storm catching them in mid-ocean, for thus far they had been favored with good weather and a stiff breeze to bear them on.

They grumbled aloud, and cast ominous glances toward the tall form in convict garb, who, almost constantly kept his place at the helm.

But, silent, stern and watchful he seemed to heed not their mutterings.

They had found him a good fair-weather sailor, and this had inspired them with certain confidence in him; but one night, when the course of the yacht lay toward the Bahamas, he was put to the test as a hard-weather seaman, as a tornado swept down upon the devoted craft with frightful fury.

But the Convict seemed to be as thoroughly at home in peril, as in safety, and his skill and courage alone saved the small schooner from destruction, all on board from death.

Yet it was with joy that the crew heard the cry of "Land ho!"

All eyes were turned upon the distant object that denoted land, and taking his glass the Convict turned his gaze in that direction.

"It is one of the outer islands of the Bahamas, and to-morrow by this hour, we will be rich men," he said calmly.

But his words were heard by all and received with a wild shout of joy.

As the schooner sped on the island loomed up rapidly, and when night came on they were among that remarkable group of six hundred

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islands known as the Bahamas, and upon one of which, San Salvador, Columbus first set foot very nearly four centuries ago.

The next morning found the little vessel slowly cruising among the islands, under very light sail, going slowly, and frequently changing her course, as though her silent helmsman was searching for some particular isle.

Thus the day wore on until noon came, and then there came the ringing cry from the Convict's lips:

"All hands, ahoy! crowd on sail, lads, for yonder lies our destination!" and he pointed to a distant island, clearly outlined against the horizon.

All was at once excitement on board, sail was crowded upon the little schooner, which went bowling along at a six-knot speed, and it was not long before the island lay dead ahead, and was in plain view.

As though he knew just what he was about, the Convict Captain held on until near the island, and then sail was taken in, and under mainsail and jib, both reefed, the yacht headed toward the inhospitable looking shores.

The crew could only see a barren wall of rock, rising from the sea, and they gazed anxiously toward their commander.

But he held on, the vessel going very slow, for dangerous reefs were visible here and there, and upon getting within a cable's length of the shore, an opening was discovered.

Into this the yacht glided, and the crew saw that they were in an arm of the sea.

"Get the boat out ahead and tow in," came the order, and it was obeyed with alacrity.

Then a surprise burst upon the crew, for the inhospitable shores of the island, were but a shell of rocks as it were, surrounding a garden-like interior.

There was a hut there, too, with trees, grass, cool springs, and every indication that the island was inhabited.

Yet no human being was discovered, and night coming on no search was made for any, while the men slept on board the schooner.

The next day all hands made a thorough search of the island through without finding any dweller thereon, and then the Convict Captain said:

"Whoever dwelt here has departed, or died, but that for which I came remains, and I have found its hiding-place."

"The treasure?" cried the crew, in chorus.

"Yes; come!"

He led the way to a secluded spot, and there, to their joy they found boxes of gold, silver, jewelry and gems.

The men nearly went wild with joy, while the Convict Captain stood silently gazing on, a grim smile upon his face.

"Come, men, we have no time to lose, so get this treasure on board the schooner," he sternly ordered, and the men set to work with a will, and at sunset that day the little vessel glided out of the inlet, and with the riches of a king on board, set sail for a port which the Convict had in view.

But the crew were gold-crazed—the riches had maddened them, and they wanted all for themselves, and were not willing that the man who had given them a fortune should have the lion's share.

So they whispered together, plotted together, and one night, as the vessel was nearing the American shores, and the Convict Captain, worn out with his labors, was sleeping, they sprung upon him in a mass, bound him, and dragged him on deck.

"Get the small boat ready," ordered the leader of the mutinous crew, he who had been the old sailing-master, and the order was quickly obeyed.

"Sir Convict, in that you have enriched us, we will not kill you; but we set you adrift upon the wide sea."

"You shall have food and water, and this bag of gold, which is a generous gift, and maybe you may gain land, or be picked up by a passing vessel; but you are a convict, and bad luck would attend us if we kept you with us, so we bid you go!"

So said the leader, and the boat was cast adrift with the Convict in it.

Livid, quivering, despairing, he floated away, calling back over the waters:

"Curses upon you, oh treacherous demons that you are!"

"May spirits haunt you day and night, and the devil's touch contaminate every dollar you have robbed me of."

"Go your ways! but Satan attend you, sleeping and waking."

His voice was now no longer heard, and soon darkness shut him out from the view of the guilty wretches, who stood gazing at each other in silence, awed by his bitter curse.

Suddenly a wild shriek burst from the lips of the helmsman, and, springing away from the tiller, he came bounding amidships where his shipmates stood.

The moon had risen and was shining brightly, and all eyes beheld the cause of the helmsman's terror, for there, coming out of the cabin companionway, was a being, monster or devil, that appalled them.

Tall, black as night, with horned head and huge inky wings, his hand stretched toward them, the seeming devil came swiftly forward, while utterly appalled, the crew, with terrific cries, mingled with prayers, sprung into the sea to escape the Satan which they believed their guilty deed and the Convict's curse had brought upon them.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RESCUE.

QUEEN DELORME possessed an utterly fearless nature, and she had won admiration from even the bold seamen of the coast, by her cool indifference to danger, in the most terrible storms.

One night she had gotten lost in the forest, while out riding, and had remained alone until the morning, when she appeared at home with a laugh at her adventure.

But, when she saw that she was the object of attention of the five men in the boat, she became nervous, as she knew not whom they might be.

Pirates were at that time often seen along the coast, and the appearance of the men, their desperate rowing in chase of her, showed that they were men she should fly from with all speed.

Her little yacht was doing well, making five knots; but the skiff was coming on at a six-knot pace.

Not a weapon did she have in the boat with her, though she seldom went out without rifle or pistol.

Seeing that she would be overtaken, and hoping that the men did not know those waters, Queen determined to head for a pine-covered isle known as Big Sentinel, as it and a smaller one, some cables' length apart, formed the entrance-way to the island-dotted bay within.

Formerly Big Sentinel Isle, and the Haunted Island half a mile away had formed the gateway; but it was a most dangerous channel near the latter island, and the coast men had been glad to give it up on that account, they said, though they had never done so until the wreck of a vessel one night upon the reef surrounding it, when all on board perished, and rumor had it their spirits haunted the spot ever after.

So the new channel, very deep and narrow, between Big and Little Sentinel Isles was discovered and used, while the Haunted Island and its vicinity were avoided by one and all, and the ghosts that roamed through its pine woods were left alone in their weird solitude.

In the channel between "The Sentinels" there were sunken rocks that the experienced pilot knew well how to avoid; but near to them ran a rugged reef, a foot or two under water, and with only an occasional break in it that was deeper.

Queen determined, therefore, to round the Big Sentinel, hug the shore, and dart between one of these openings in the sunken reef, well knowing if the boat's crew did not know of its existence, they would dash up on it and crush in the bottom of their skiff, which must draw at least eighteen inches, and the sunken rocks would not be seen in time to check their speed.

So past the Big Sentinel she swept, rounding it to enter between it and Little Sentinel, and keeping off from the former half a dozen boat's lengths.

Her eyes were fixed upon the waters ahead, and she picked out readily the place at which she was to run through.

She knew that she had not a foot beneath her keel in going over the reef, but then that was enough if she made no mistake and hit the opening fairly.

It was a risk, she knew; but she felt confidence in herself, and took the chances that she might wreck her pursuers.

If she had before felt any doubt as to their motive, it was dispelled when she turned for the channel, as the ship held on in hot pursuit.

Seeing that she was heading for the island, Queen recognized their ignorance of the locality, when the helmsman called out:

"Ho, lady! we bear a letter for your father, the count. Will you give it to him?"

"Count Delorme lives in yonder mansion on the cliff, and you will find him there," she shouted back.

"But we have no time to go there."

"Then you should not have been the bearer of a letter you had not time to deliver, and I am also in a hurry just now," was the cool retort.

"Will you not stop for us, lady?"

"I will not."

"This gentleman wishes to go ashore."

Without arguing the point as to where was the gentleman, Queen rejoined:

"Then let him swim ashore, if you have not time to land him."

"Curse you, girl! lay to, or I will fire on you!" shouted the man.

"Coward! if you would fire upon a woman, do so," was the plucky rejoinder.

But the man did not fire, and urged his oarsmen to greater exertions.

As the boat was not directly in her wake, Queen saw that they must also pass through the break in the reef as she did.

What to do she knew not, for she dared not change her course then for fear that she, too,

would strike a rock and go down, as the waters just there were dangerous in the extreme.

Her hand trembled slightly as she held the tiller, but she could do nothing but hold on and trust to some accident to save her.

A league from home, she knew no help could come from there, as the men must be called up, sail set on the yacht, and then, by the time it reached an offing, the men in the skiff could have captured her and their lugger be far out to sea, while darkness coming on, they could elude pursuit.

It was no wonder then that the maiden almost yielded to despair, and her lips began to quiver.

Another moment and her strength would have failed her, when suddenly she heard a clear voice hail:

"Yacht, ahoy! stand on as you are, lady, and I will do what I can to keep back your pursuers!"

A cry of joy came to Queen's lips at the words, and turning in the direction from whence the voice came, she suddenly beheld a light skiff shoot out from a cove in Big Sentinel Island and row toward her.

It held but a single occupant, and Queen noted that he wore a uniform and naval cap, while his broad shoulders and strong arms sent the boat flying over the waters.

His face she could not see, for his back was toward her; but she noted that the skiff was long, narrow, very light in build and painted white, and that the oars had large blades, and caught the water with tremendous power.

Without looking behind him, the oarsman headed on a course that would about meet the yacht, or at least come between it and the pursuing boat.

That the man in the skiff had courage was evidenced by his boldly rowing out to face five desperate men.

Holding on for the break in the reef, with renewed courage, Queen's face flushed and paled by turns as she watched the skiff with its single occupant, the sailing of her yacht, and her pursuers, who were now bending every energy to overtake her.

"Avast there, Gold Lace! Keep off, or I'll fire upon you!" cried the helmsman at the pursuing boat.

"Fire away, you cowardly sea curs!" came back the defiant response, and the oarsman never turned his head to see if the threat would be carried out, but bent to his blades with a strength that made his skiff leap forward at each stroke.

Just then Queen shot into full view of the Castle Cloudland, and he saw the signals flying to give an alarm, and beheld her father upon the cliff, pacing to and fro, and stopping at each turn to gaze out upon the waters, while he waited for the coming of his crew.

As she looked, she started, for the sound of a gun came from the boat astern.

The shot had been fired to alarm the man in the skiff; but it failed to have the desired effect, as he still held on unwaveringly.

A moment more came his clear voice ordering:

"Luff your yacht sharp, lady, and I'll run alongside and take you off, for I can outrow them."

"Ay, ay, sir," Queen cried, now perfectly calm and full of courage.

As she spoke, the helmsman of the pursuing boat fired again.

Yet still the oarsman held on, and was now almost upon the yacht, which Queen had brought to, and stood upon the stern, ready to step into the skiff, as directed by the bold man who was attempting her rescue.

As the skiff drew near, the oarsman dexterously checked its speed, whirled it alongside the yacht, and suddenly raising a rifle from between his feet, fired upon the coming boat.

A shriek from one of the men, a heavy splash, as a man sprung overboard in his agony, told how true had been the aim of the oarsman.

"Now, step into the skiff, lady!" cried the oarsman, resuming his oars, and drawing the stern of his boat around so that Queen could get into it.

Instantly she did so, and a vigorous stroke of the blades sent the light shell away from the yacht, while a skillful turn placed the little craft between them and the pursuing boat, which, momentarily checked by the death of one of its oarsmen, again came forward, the helmsman taking the place of the dead man, who had sunk from sight.

"There is a reef ahead, sir," cried Queen, as she saw her rescuer dashing swiftly on.

"I know it well, lady, and that with this tide there is but a foot of water at the shallowest point; but this skiff draws but four inches with both of us, and I'll lead that boat into a trap, as I observed was your intention," was the reply, and the oarsman never checked his terrific strokes as he spoke.

Glancing astern, Queen saw that they were gaining upon their pursuers, and that the single pair of arms were outrowing the four pair.

Then she glanced into the face of her rescuer, as she sat in the bottom of the skiff, and never before had she seen a handsomer man, she was forced to admit to herself.

His complexion was darkly bronzed by exposure, his features were cast in a perfect mold, and each one possessed expression in a marked degree, while his large, dark-brown eyes, shaded by lashes that a woman would envy, were full of gentleness, and yet deep within them seemed to slumber a fire that might break forth dangerously if kindled with anger or resentment.

Who he was, Queen did not know, or what he was doing there, in that light skiff.

He had boldly faced big odds to come to her rescue, he had displayed great strength and endurance in the fight for triumph, and proven himself a dead shot, and more she did not know.

"Here is the reef, miss," he said, hastily glancing over his shoulders, and his words recalled her from her observation of him, which seemed to be a fascination she made no effort to resist.

As he spoke, he skillfully feathered his oars, so as not to bury them and strike the rocks, and with just the slightest grating sound the skiff went over the reef.

"The tide is lower than I imagined, for we touched; but now to see what the boat will do," he said, quietly, still continuing his giant stroke.

A quarter of a minute passed, and then came a wild shout:

"Back water, hard!"

But too late the order, for a crash followed, and the boat had struck with terrific force, while the four men were thrown in a heap into the bottom.

A laugh broke from the lips of the young man, while Queen said earnestly:

"That ends the chase, sir."

"Yes; but I fear you will lose your yacht, for see, they are leaving their boat to swim to it, but better the yacht than its owner," he said, with a smile.

"Ah, yes, sir, and I owe it to your daring and kindness that I go not with the yacht," and Queen spoke with a tremor in her voice.

"I was hunting on the island, miss, saw your danger, hastened to my boat and rowed out to share it with you, that is all."

"All! you look lightly upon it, sir, indeed, for Heaven only knows all that you have saved me from; but may I ask your name?"

"My name is Henry Harvey, miss, and my father is an humble farmer, living up the coast."

"Ah, yes, I know his place, and have heard that he had a son in the navy, and you are Lieutenant Henry Harvey?"

"Yes, Miss Delorme."

"You know me then?" she said, with surprise.

"I have heard of the Angel of Cloudland Castle, Miss Delorme, and know that you must be she; but see, they have boarded your yacht, and are putting back for their lugger.

"Oh! that I had my father's smack and a good crew to overhaul them," said the young officer.

"There comes my father's yacht, just leaving her anchorage; but she is too late, for, see, the lugger is standing down to meet her men, and they will have four miles' start."

"And escape, for darkness is not half an hour away," and still keeping up his strong stroke, Lieutenant Harvey headed across the bay to meet the coming yacht, while the lugger, after picking up her crew, set the little craft on fire and headed out to sea under all sail.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRIEST'S SACRIFICE.

WHEN Captain Duluth was captured on the outlaw vessel of Caspar, the Coast Corsair, he went to prison for life, as, the victim of his captors, they had sworn that he too was guilty.

His judges had been impressed by his earnest and seemingly truthful manner, and they had erred on the side of mercy, as they thought, by sending him to a life-long imprisonment, while the chief and his other officers were condemned to death upon the gallows.

With it in his power, through the kindness of Lieutenant Henry Harvey, who had captured this schooner, to clear himself of the charge of guilt, some secret mystery kept Bianca Duluth from writing to England, or even to Count Leon Delorme, to prove his innocence, and that, as he had said, his vessel had been taken by the pirates, and he forced to serve as an officer to save his life.

And he would not even tell the name of his vessel, nor from whence she hailed, or whither bound, and, as Captain Caspar kept no "log," it was impossible for Lieutenant Harvey to find out aught about the strange man.

He was, in spite of himself, interested in Captain Duluth, and tried to save him; but to prevent him the man he sought to save, stepped in between as a barrier, and so he bade him farewell, and saw the walls of a prison close upon him, with the strange words of Duluth ringing in his ears, that he was doomed to a life-long imprisonment.

"Unless I can make my escape!"

As for Captain Caspar, the Corsair, he took his capture most coolly.

He had hoisted the black flag, lived under its shadow, and accepted the alternative, of dying for it without an outward murmur.

He heard his sentence without a tremor, and

walked back to his cell to await his doom, a cruel smile of triumph upon his lips, at the thought that if he suffered, Captain Duluth and others must suffer too.

With just ten days to live, Caspar, the Corsair, refused the kind offices of a priest who sought to see him.

"I am guilty, I have broken the laws of God and man, and if I am punished by the one on earth, let me meet my punishment hereafter," he said calmly.

He was a man of wonderful nerve, and his face showed refinement, and marked character, though it was not a face to love.

He wore a long black beard, which made him appear forty years of age, though he was five years younger.

He wore the uniform of a naval captain; and it fitted his compact form well.

It was said by some that he was an Englishman and had been in the Royal Navy, while others asserted that he was an American merchant captain that had taken to preying on commerce.

Certain it was that he had selected the American coast for his cruising ground, and his name was feared from Maine to Florida.

The capture therefore of Caspar, the Corsair, and his fleet schooner was a feather in the cap of the young lieutenant, Henry Harvey.

Into his cell therefore Captain Caspar went, to wait his trial, vouchsafing no word of his past, to satisfy the curious regarding him, and content to die only as he had been known, under the name of Caspar, the Corsair.

"Captain, you have said that you cared not to see a priest," said the jailer, the day before the one appointed for the execution, entering the cell.

"I meant what I said, jailer," was the retort.

"But, sir," urged the keeper, who was a pious man, being a good Catholic, "a number of the clergy have been here to see you, and I have been forced to tell them all that you would not see them."

"You did right, my man."

"But, sir, there is a good father without now who begs you to see him, for he says he has words of comfort to give you."

"He can do me no good."

"He can do you no harm, sir."

"That is true."

"He says he wishes to pray for your soul and at least to let you feel that there is one who feels for you in your distress."

"Very well, bid him come in, if you wish, but I see him to please you, as you have been kind to me."

"Thank you, sir," and the keeper, who treated his prisoner with marked respect, hastened away.

It was not very long before he returned, and opening the cell he ushered in a priest in his robes.

"My son, peace be unto you, though grievously hast thou sinned," said the priest in a solemn voice, while the keeper impressively answered:

"Amen!"

"Great God! Adolph!" said the prisoner, as the keeper left them alone in the cell.

"Yes, Caspar, I am your brother Adolph," was the low reply of the priest.

"And a priest. Is this mockery, or rather a disguise assumed to visit me?"

"Oh, no, Caspar, I am really a priest."

"And your—your wife?" and the words were hardly audible.

But the priest heard them and said:

"I never married, Adolph."

"What? You did not marry the girl whom I left home, fortune, all, that you should marry for, knowing that you loved her, Adolph, I gave her up to you."

"Now you tell me that you did not marry her?"

"No, Caspar, I did not, though I loved her then with all my soul."

"I told her of your letter, and that you said you gave her up to me; but she refused to become my wife, scorned me, said that you possessed her whole love, and soon after became the wife of a Count Delorme, an adventurer."

"Caspar, my brother, her act caused me to give up the world, and I went to a monastery and became a priest."

"I came here, and seeing that Caspar the Corsair had been captured, a strange dread came into my heart that it was my brother, from whom I had not heard for over fifteen years, and who had made such a sacrifice for me, giving me the woman he loved, because he saw that I loved her, and leaving me his share in our father's fortune."

"And you find that Caspar Conrad, that was your brother, is Caspar the Corsair?" said the pirate with a sneer.

"I do, alas! I saw you at the cell window, Caspar, my poor brother, and recognized you, and I have tried for days to see you."

"At last I prevailed upon the jailer to admit me, for I am determined to save you."

"My soul is eternally lost, Adolph, and not even your brotherly prayers can save it," was the sad reply.

"Well, I will pray for your soul when your

body is out of danger," was the impressive reply.

"My body will be free from pain within twenty-four hours, Adolph, for I die on the gallows to-morrow; then you can try the efficiency of prayer upon my guilty soul," was the bitter response of the outlaw.

"I'll act first and pray afterward," was the reply in a significant tone that attracted the attention of the prisoner particularly.

"What do your words mean, Adolph?"

"That you must escape."

"There is no chance for me to do so, or I would not stay here to hang like a dog."

"There is a chance."

"How mean you?"

"I came not here unprepared, for I came to save you."

"In the devil's name, how— Ah! I beg your priestly pardon for my profanity, brother, but I am not accustomed to such godly company."

"You are pardoned, brother, for a man who has reddened his hands with human blood cannot expect to keep his lips unsullied with oaths."

"You reason well, brother mine, and doubtless preach a good sermon."

"You will have a good text for an obituary discourse over the dead body of your pirate brother."

"Nay, brother, forgive my words, for they called forth your bitter response; but I feel, Caspar, that I was unwittingly the cause of your becoming what you are."

"Had you remained at home and married our cousin, Hilda Conrad, you would have led a happy life, and my heart would have ached far less than it has in the past bitter years; but you fled from home, became a wanderer, and reckless as you always were, you went to the bad."

"Now, Caspar, I will not see you die, and I came here to save you."

"But how?"

"Here is a razor and brush, and you can soon remove that wealth of beard, while my robe will infold you, for we are of a size, and you can pass out unrecognized, for we are much alike, as you will see when your beard is shaven clean."

"But you, Adolph?"

"I will put on your clothes, and remain."

"And suffer for me?"

"I will not have to suffer."

"Why, man, they would hang you, I verily believe, for aiding the pirate Caspar to escape, and I'll not place you in danger."

"No, Caspar, they will harm me not, for you forget I am a priest, and all about the prison are good Catholics."

"When you are free, I will call the jailer, tell him just what I have done, and that you were my brother."

"And would you disgrace our name, which I alone have sullied?"

"Oh, no; for I am known here only as Father Adolph, a Spanish priest."

"It is a temptation, if I felt that you would not get into trouble," said the pirate chief, thoughtfully.

"Do not think of me, for I will get out all right, for I will suggest to the prison commandant that, to prevent its becoming known that you escaped, he take one of your men, a heavily bearded fellow who does not look unlike you, dress him up in your clothes and hang him, for he, with four others, is to die anyhow, and the execution is to be in the prison plaza."

"A good idea, brother, and one which I believe the commandant will avail himself of, to avoid trouble for himself."

"Then you will do as I desire, and make your escape?"

The pirate was silent a moment, but his thoughts were busy, and he carefully weighed all the chances for and against in his mind.

The priest stood gazing at him in silent meditation, and awaited for him to speak.

At last the pirate's face lighted up, and he said firmly:

"I have decided."

"To go?"

"Yes."

"Thank God!"

"I will get ready at once, for in a very short while it will be dark, for see, the sun is setting."

"Yes; and Heaven grant it may rise upon you a free man."

"I hope so, Brother Adolph; but the chances are desperate I take."

"At any rate, if I fail, it will set to-morrow night upon my grave."

"Ah, brother! look to the bright side."

"I do."

"And, Caspar?"

"Yes, Adolph?"

"Here is a purse of gold for you."

"Keep it, brother, though I thank you; but I have a purse of gold, and besides, hidden away in my inner pocket, I have a leather pouch of rare gems that are worth a fortune."

The priest shuddered while he said:

"But they are blood-stained, while mine is honest gold."

"Ah, my poor deluded Adolph, all gold is

tarnished by crime, for that which is given the church has often been stolen, cost a human life, or contributed first to sinful pleasures.

"No, no; your gold may have come more honestly into your hands than did mine, but it in itself I'll wager high is none the purer; but let me prepare while I can."

The priest handed to him a razor and brush, and as he began to cut off his long, black, silken beard, Father Adolph asked:

"Will you not promise, my brother, to give up your evil career, once you are free of these prison-walls?"

"No, brother, I can make no promises."

"I have cast the past and its loves, its joys, its memories behind me, and I live in the present alone."

"I have no home but the sea, no country, and the Black Flag, which so long has floated above me, may yet be my sable shroud."

"Forgive me, and, if it be a pleasure to you so to do, pray for me; but I would urge that you forget me as one unworthy a thought."

"Your robe now, please—oh! I do look monk-like, but I'm a wolf in lamb's wool."

"Now, Brother Adolph, farewell, and may the God you serve forever bless you!"

With this prayer upon his lips, Caspar, the Corsair, rapped upon the iron door for the keeper to come and let him out, while his brother, the priest, dressed in his uniform, stood near, anxiously awaiting the result of the daring plot.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIEUTENANT HARVEY.

It had been three years since Henry Harvey had set his foot upon the doorstep of his home, for the young officer had been away on a lengthened cruise.

He had departed just before the arrival of Count Leon Delorme upon the coast of Maine, so knew only of the grandeur of the Cloudland Castle and its surroundings, from what his father wrote him about the new-comers and the wonderful improvements made.

Just after leaving home for his cruise, and while in command of a small schooner-of-war, sent on special service, Lieutenant Harvey had run across and captured the noted rover, Caspar the Corsair, and this had greatly reflected to his credit with the Government, with which he had already stood most high, owing to his past services, for he had ever been a most daring and skillful young officer.

Henry Harvey was the only child of poor parents, who dwelt upon the coast of Maine some leagues from Cloudland Castle.

His father was a farmer, making a fair living, and also the commander of a coaster, that he was wont to run to and from Portland and Boston, when there was no work to be done on the farm.

In his voyages Henry had accompanied him from his seventh year, and the boy became a thorough sailor by the time he was fifteen.

He did chores about the farm, attended a country school, when it was in session, and was very ambitious to learn and to rise in the world.

He fished all along the coast waters for miles, knew the bay perfectly, and was a successful huntsman.

One night an armed vessel was caught in a calm off the coast, and the boy went on board to sell some fish, game and vegetables to the crew.

The captain told him it was a Spanish vessel-of-war, and the ensign of Spain was flying above her decks; but Henry Harvey was himself a sailor, and a boy of remarkably good sense, he saw certain things about the vessel that made him feel that she was not what her commander represented.

He saw that a storm was brewing, and coming up from seaward, he knew the vessel would be caught on a lee-shore, and, from where she had anchored, it would be impossible to go to sea against the tempest, and so he told the captain.

"Then what am I to do?" cried the captain in alarm.

"I can run you to a safe anchorage, sir, in the bay," was the answer.

"If you do, boy, I will pay you the ransom of a prince," was the earnest response.

So, Henry remained on board, and when the storm struck, he took the helm and ran her to a safe anchorage in what afterward became the harbor of Cloudland Castle.

Then, Henry took his boat and went down the coast to his home, to keep his parents from being anxious about him, but promising to return the next morning and pilot the craft out to sea, and to a spot up the coast where pine spars could be cut, of which the captain said he was in great need.

"Father, that craft is a pirate, I am sure, so please go in the sloop at once to Portland and warn the cruiser there, for I shall take the vessel into the Island Pond, where you know there is good spar-timber, and she will be there for several days I know."

"But bring the schooner in by night, so she will be anchored across the channel by dawn, and don't let a light be seen on board, for those are sharp-eyed fellows."

"I will anchor the schooner over by the shore, so that they will not see you come in, if there are no lights on board."

So said Henry to his father, and the old skipper was anxious to get off at once for Portland, and, accompanied by the farm-hand, he was soon sailing away in his sloop, while his son was returning to the suspicious schooner.

Early the next morning the schooner got under way and stood up the coast, Henry Harvey at the wheel, and so much pleased with the boy was the captain, that he said:

"My lad, I have determined to keep you on board with me."

"But my poor mother and father, sir?"

"Oh, they'll get along all right, and you will go back home rich; but where is this Island Pond you spoke of?"

"Some eight miles from here, sir; yonder where you see that high point of land."

"Are there any fishermen or other dwellers near?"

"Only a few, sir, living inland, with perhaps half a dozen fishermen further up the coast."

"Well, I do not care to go in by day; the fact is, I do not desire to be seen off this coast just now, so stand off until night and then run in to the anchorage you speak of."

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure good spars can be cut there?"

"The very best, sir, for we coasters always get our masts there."

"Perhaps some craft may be there now fitting out?"

"Not at this season of the year, sir."

"You call it Island Pond?"

"Yes, sir, for it is a round sheet of water, formed by a link of islands."

"I see; but you can run in by night, for these are dangerous waters?"

"Oh, yes, sir, for I know them well."

"Well, keep off until night, and then put in," and the captain turned away.

This conversation convinced Henry more than ever that the schooner was a pirate, and he discovered too that he was not to be allowed to go ashore.

Anxious not to be suspected however, he pretended to be desirous of remaining on board, and so told the captain.

The schooner carried a heavy armament for her tonnage, and nearly a hundred men, while they were as hard a looking set as ever trod an outlaw deck.

With the darkness coming on Henry headed the vessel shoreward, and an hour after night-fall ran her into the Island Pond Harbor with a skill that won the admiration of the captain and crew.

The next morning dawned, and Henry glanced toward the channel entrance to see if the cruiser was there, for he hoped to find her there, though he hardly thought there had been time for his father to get to Portland and return with the vessel.

The men went at once ashore and began to cut spars, the captain finding, as the boy had said, fine timber for the purpose.

During the day, as he seemed to have become one of the crew, the boy found proof that his suspicions were correct, and that the schooner was a West Indian pirate, that had left his regular cruising-ground to seek prizes elsewhere, and, when fitted out, intended to maraud some of the small villages along the coast.

With darkness the work ceased, and the captain said he would remain in the harbor until his vessel was in perfect condition, and Henry's heart bounded with joy at this decision, as he feared the cruiser might not be at Portland, and his father have to go to Portsmouth, and perhaps to Boston.

That night the boy turned in with an anxious heart, and, after midnight he hardly slept, so anxious was he to be on deck, and see if the cruiser was there.

It was not light when he went on deck, and cast his eyes about him.

The crew had been called to get to work early, and, as they were turning out dawn broke, and Henry turned his eyes quickly toward the channel entrance.

His heart bounded with joy as he saw lying at anchor there a large brig-of-war.

"Why there's a vessel," he said, innocently.

But his word awoke the wildest consternation on board the schooner, the captain rushing on deck half-dressed.

"An American cruiser, as I live!" he cried, in broken English, and instantly the men were called to their posts.

"There isn't any war between Spain and the United States, so you needn't be scared, captain," said Henry, with affected innocence.

"Get to the wheel, boy, and let us run out of this, for I'll have sail set and the anchor up in a minute, and we can put to sea between yonder two islands," said the captain excitedly, while his men were hastening to get up the anchor and spread sail.

"We can't go between those islands, sir," said Harry.

"Then between the next ones."

"We will not be able to do so, captain."

"Then how can we get to sea?"

"By running out through the channel, sir, for we've got room, I guess, to go by the brig."

"Why did you not tell me this before, boy?"

"What, sir?"

"That there was only one entrance and exit to this infernal trap."

"I didn't think you wanted to know."

"Curse you, boy! You have come into a trap."

"The brig won't fire on a Spanish vessel, sir."

"Fool! this is no Spanish vessel, but a pirate."

"Now take the wheel, and we must go to sea, if we have to fight the brig at close quarters."

"She's bigger than the schooner, sir."

"Never mind, we must whip her."

"But you didn't tell me you was a pirate, sir."

"Well, you know it now, and you'll hang with the rest of us if we are taken, so do your duty."

"We are moving, sir," said an officer.

"Luff, boy, as soon as she minds her helm well, and we'll give a broadside to yonder brig, and then head for the channel, and we'll pour shot into her from our bow guns."

"We must get out of this, or hang!"

The brig, as though conscious of her strength, lay in the channel at anchor, and with her sails furled.

She was half a hundred tons larger than the schooner, and carried two more guns, while her crew numbered a score more of men.

As the schooner began to move the brig's crew suddenly began to set sail, and the anchor left the bottom.

"Why, captain, she ran in for spars, I guess, and didn't seem to mean any harm, until you showed fight," said Henry.

"Well, she does mean harm, and so do we."

"Luff, now, and at the guns there! fire!"

Henry luffed very skillfully, for the brig, as he managed to make the broadside fly wild.

"Boy, you are losing your nerve, so be careful, for remember you are on a pirate's deck."

"Keep her straight for the channel, now," and raising his voice the captain called out:

"Work those bow guns lively, men, and aim to kill every time!"

The roar of the guns awoke many an echo along the coast, and went thundering inland among the hills and valleys, telling of a battle at sea.

But somehow Henry acted as though he was frightened, and the schooner swerved badly, causing the shots to fly wild.

But Henry was playing a deep part, and playing it well.

He saw his father at the helm of the brig, which now was under way, and heading into the harbor, and he determined to do all he could to aid the cruiser.

Upon the deck of the brig the men were now at quarters, and her commander stood upon the quarter-deck with half a dozen officers about him.

At the wheel, aided by a seaman, was a man with bronzed face, iron-gray hair, and a look of one in the better walks of life.

He was dressed in a sailor suit, and held the helm with the air of one who knew just what he was about.

As the schooner fired her broadside the brig's captain was looking at her through his glass, and said:

"That was well meant, but your son, Skipper Harvey, saved us from getting it, as I saw him suddenly move the wheel."

"Harry knows, sir, just what can be done with a vessel," answered the old man proudly, and as the bow gun's shots also flew wild, the brig's captain cried:

"That boy will get himself into trouble, I fear, if he helps us again."

"Now, Skipper Harvey, we will stand toward him, and let him feel our metal."

It was a thrilling sight to see the two vessels, the one a cruiser, the other a pirate, going into a battle to the death, with a mere boy at the helm of one, his gray-bearded father at the wheel of the other.

A thrilling scene indeed, and a deadly one in that island-guarded harbor, with only wild and rugged shores overlooking.

At last, as the two vessels were now not a fourth of a mile apart, the brig opened fire pouring a broadside into the schooner, and standing off and across the channel, so that the schooner could not run out.

The captain knew that the brig would be no match for the schooner in a race, and so having his enemy in a trap he meant to keep him there, for the pirate could not get to sea without being laid aboard by the cruiser.

The broadside of the brig was well-aimed, and then the battle began in earnest.

Understanding the desperate situation he was in, the pirate captain maneuvered to run out to sea, by catching the brig in stays, or out of the channel on a tack, so that he could get by, and to do this he took his stand by the helm and ordered Henry Harvey just what moves to make.

Thus a game of chess was begun between the two vessels, and the schooner drew nearer the brig all the while, and each kept up a hot fire, making a continual war of heavy guns, and doing much damage on both sides.

Catching the brig at a disadvantage once, the schooner having the better wind, she would have dashed under her stern and thus run to sea, getting a good start before the cruiser could go about and follow, but for the young helmsman, who, realizing the cunning success of the pirate, thwarted it by shouting:

"Hard! hard down your helm! or we are on that reef!"

His cry was heard on board the brig, and to the surprise of her helmsman saw the schooner swing off and have to go about right under the guns of the brig.

"My boy did that, sir, for there is no reef there," cried Skipper Harvey in admiration.

"Fire!" yelled the brig's captain, and her broadside crippled the schooner so that her bowsprit was cut away and before she could recover from the shock the brig boarded and the battle was won.

"This is your gallant boy, Skipper Harvey," cried the brig's captain, when the fight was ended.

"Yes, sir; Henry, this is Captain Holt of the brig of war Star."

The boy doffed his hat, while Captain Holt said calmly:

"My lad, I owe the capture of the schooner wholly to your pluck and skill, and not only shall you get your share of the prize money, the share of an officer, but you have won a midshipman's berth in the navy and I will see that you get it."

And Captain Holt kept his word, for six months after Henry Harvey was appointed a midshipman in the navy, and his prize money of several thousand dollars placed his parents in easy circumstances, for the farm was improved, the homestead fitted up, and Skipper Harvey had no longer to risk a life upon the sea to make both ends meet, but could spend his days at his fireside in comfort.

And Henry Harvey it was, who, years after, as a lieutenant commanding a schooner-of-war captured Caspar the Corsair, and sought to save Captain Duluth from life imprisonment.

And he it was who saved Queen Delorme from capture by the lugger's crew.

CHAPTER XV.

JEALOUSY.

FROM the day of his rescue of Queen Delorme, Lieutenant Henry Harvey was an acknowledged friend at Cloudland Castle.

The count loved his money, his ease, his elegant home, and all; but he idolized his beautiful daughter, and the young officer received a warm greeting after his boarding the yacht with Queen.

To pursue the lugger was useless, for she was miles away, and already fading in the dim distance, and the yacht was not provisioned for a cruise and had only five men on board, with whom the count had hastily started, while Henry Harvey had seen, fully a dozen on board the kidnapping craft.

The young officer told how only two days before he had come home on a leave of a couple of months, after an absence of three years, and had taken his light skiff and rifle for a hunt among the islands, when he had suddenly discovered Queen's danger, and hastened to her rescue.

The count and Queen both had heard the story of the capture of the pirate schooner in Island Pond Harbor through the courage of Henry Harvey, and in fact many stories were told along the coast of his deeds as a boy and daring as a naval officer, and they knew him well by reputation.

Both knew him also as the son of parents who were honest people, coming of a good family, but poor farmers withal.

But Count Leon Delorme was compelled to admit to himself, as he gazed upon the handsome face, full of daring and refinement, and the tall, superb form and dignified carriage, that no one he had ever seen was his superior in appearance.

Upon returning to Cloudland Castle, Henry Harvey was persuaded to remain to tea, and in fact urged to remain all night; but he said he must return home by bedtime, as his parents would be anxious regarding him.

"I will send you home, if you persist in going, in my carriage," said the count, as they ascended the steps leading to the cliff.

"No, indeed, thank you, sir; there is a good breeze, and I can run home in an hour or two."

"But these are dangerous waters to sail over by night—yes, and by day."

"You forget, Count Delorme, that I was born on this coast, and know them as I do the deck of my ship."

Upon reaching the mansion a gentleman advanced to meet them, and the count gave him a warm greeting, after which he said:

"Come, Queen, here is Lieutenant Bainbridge, whom I forgot to tell you would be here tonight; and, Lieutenant Harvey, permit me to present Lieutenant Bainbridge, also of the navy."

"Ah, Harvey, do I find you in these parts?" said the stranger coldly, and somewhat haughtily.

"Yes, lieutenant; I live not far from here, I thought you knew."

"I had forgotten the fact; but Count Delorme, I heard that you had put hastily to sea, and your butler told me Miss Delorme was in some danger."

"Yes, and would have been kidnapped but for the courage of Lieutenant Harvey, who boldly drove off her pursuers, killing one."

Preble Bainbridge frowned at the words of the count, and Queen observed it, for she said:

"Are you sorry I was rescued, Lieutenant Bainbridge?"

"Ah, Miss Queen, I am only sorry that I was not here to save you."

"It is better as it is, for I am safe, and you might have failed in rescuing me," was the wicked reply of the maiden, and she hastened away to prepare for supper.

Preble Bainbridge was a very winning man; but rich, good-looking, and coming from a good old family, he had been spoilt, for he was the pet of society wherever his vessel went.

He was haughty in his bearing, proud and overbearing to his inferiors; while on shipboard he was a martinet and cordially disliked by his crew and even officers, as well as greatly feared, for he had a fiery temper, and was a man to dread in anger, in fact even in his pleasant humor.

He had shot a brother officer in a duel of his making, had killed a seaman in a pet, had struck a midshipman with his hand when angered by him, and would have been dismissed the service but for the great wealth and influence of his family, and the valuable duty his father had rendered the government in time of need.

Meeting Queen, he had loved her, it being the first real preference he had shown for any one maiden, and he had been furious when refused by her; but for once he had controlled his temper.

Seeing Henry Harvey there, he was jealous, and during the supper he rather moped, while the young officer made himself most entertaining, until the count was charmed with him.

Soon after supper Henry Harvey arose to depart, and declining to drive home, went by his boat, the count, Bainbridge and Queen escorting him to the cliff arbor, and watching his white sail as it skimmed along over the waters.

"You have known Harvey before then?" said the count.

"Yes, sir, we have met before," was the cold reply.

"He is a very striking-looking man, and certainly a most entertaining gentleman, and a dashing, daring officer."

Preble Bainbridge did not seem to like the count's praise of his brother officer, and so said:

"He is always trying to do some act for notoriety, but then he comes of a low family, I believe."

"Yes, I have heard that his father and yours were cousins, Lieutenant Bainbridge," remarked Queen calmly.

The officer flinched, and said hastily:

"I believe they do claim some relationship with us, but Harvey has never referred to it himself to me, and in fact I know little of him, as we have seldom met."

"You surprise me, lieutenant, for there is an old woman's tale told on the coast that once you ran up here in your yacht from Boston, with a pleasure party on board, were caught in a storm and driven upon a reef, and Lieutenant Harvey, then a midshipman, home on leave, failing to get a crew to face the tempest, went out alone in his life-skiff, and after making four different trips, at deadly peril, rescued you and the sixteen others who were on board, the yacht going to pieces as he took the crew of four men off on his last trip, and which the coast-men, brave men that they were, still refused to make, and begged him not to, as he was utterly worn out."

"Did this occur, Lieutenant Bainbridge, or is it but old woman's gossip?"

"Oh yes, it is true; but then Harvey knew these waters well, and my father offered him a handsome reward."

"Did he accept it, sir?"

"I believe not," was the evasive answer.

"How people will gossip, for I heard that he told your father that his gray hairs alone prevented him from resenting his offer as a direct insult."

"You seem to admire Lieutenant Harvey, Miss Delorme," sneered Bainbridge.

"I do immensely," was the frank response, and as the count who had been apart talking with the sailing-master of his yacht, now joined them, they walked back to the mansion, the young officer in no enviable frame of mind at all that had occurred, to judge from his muttered words:

"That fellow will be a dangerous rival if I allow him to cross my path; but it must not, shall not be!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A MYSTERY.

AFTER the rescue of Queen Delorme by Lieutenant Harvey, matters went on as serenely at Cloudland Castle, as was their wont.

Captain Preble Bainbridge—for he had re-

ceived his promotion as such, and it was to make it known to Queen, as an extra inducement, that he had hastened to visit her, and written the count of his coming—had not been happy in the thought that Henry Harvey had been the rescuer of the maiden instead of himself.

He had also seen that Queen regarded the young officer with feelings of friendship and admiration, and that the count seemed rather to like him too.

It certainly was not to be wondered at that they did, after what he had done, but then jealousy is a species of short madness, and Preble Bainbridge was inclined to see everything through green goggles just then.

He had, upon a former visit to Cloudland Castle, when his vessel was anchored near, talked to Queen of love, and met with a decided rebuff; but he was not one to give up a cause he had undertaken, and he therefore determined to lay siege again, and consequently he again visited the maiden, feeling that he would be justified by his promotion to a captaincy, and the sanction of Count Delorme, who had hinted as much.

Consequently, he put in an appearance hopefully, going overland in his own coach and four, and to his dismay, found a rival in the field.

Finding that he could do nothing by slurring at Henry Harvey to Queen, Captain Bainbridge at once determined to have a serious talk with her, and the next morning found her as she stood in the Cliff Overlook, as the arbor was called, gazing out upon the sea.

"My dear Miss Queen, I fear I was hateful last night toward my good friend Harvey, but I was tired with my long journey over execrable roads, and so provoked that I had not been the fortunate one to save you from those pirates, and this is my apology for my unmanly conduct."

Queen was about to make a hateful response, for she felt like it, but checking her intended words, she said:

"I am glad you make such a manly acknowledgment that you were wrong, Captain Bainbridge, and it is forgotten that you were otherwise than generous."

"I thank you, Miss Queen; but I had no right to speak against Harvey, for he did save my life and the lives of my guests and crew, and risked his own life over and over again to do so."

"He is a noble fellow, and I regard him most highly, and shall ever do what I can to advance him in the service."

Here the pride and self-opinion of the man broke out again, but it was neatly quenched by Queen's reply:

"I think he depends wholly upon himself to advance his promotion, and in fact, he is now, I believe, next to you in rank, and has been far less time in the service, while his family being of humble origin, he has no influence, no 'Power behind the Throne,' as it were, to aid him."

Queen said what she did in the most innocent manner possible; but Captain Bainbridge flushed, and was very sorry that he had spoken as he had.

"Well, Miss Queen, I am sure that I wish him well, in all things, if I may make one exception."

"And what may that be?"

"Winning your love."

"I do not carry my heart on my sleeve, Captain Bainbridge, to be taken by any one I meet, and I only but yesterday met Lieutenant Harvey."

"True, and I have known you a year, but from the first meeting I have loved you, and I so long to have the sweet assurance from your lips that I am loved in return."

"I told you once before, sir, that I did not love you."

"True, but you did not mean that I could not teach you to do so, and your father is willing that I should be your suitor."

"I wish to please my father in all things, Captain Bainbridge; but I do not love you, nor do I feel that I ever can."

"Still you will not utterly cast me off, but give me some hope for the future?"

"Captain Bainbridge, I have determined, and my father is willing, that I shall not marry until I am twenty years of age."

"I am now just nineteen, and what may happen during the coming year, no one can tell."

"Now let us drop this subject, please."

"You are certainly not in love now?"

"I am not."

"Nor pledged to any one?"

"Ask my father, please, on that subject," was the evasive response, and Queen led the way toward the mansion, where Preble Bainbridge soon after cornered the count in the library.

"My dear count, I have had a talk with Miss Delorme, as you said I might, and she tells me she does not now love me, will not marry until she is twenty, is anxious to obey your wishes, does not know what may happen during the ensuing year, and, in answer to my question as to her being now pledged to any one, bids me ask you."

"Well, Bainbridge, there is a little proviso, but so slight a one I did not consider it necessary to speak to you upon the subject."

"Will you do so now?"

"Certainly, and I intended to do so when you made a formal demand for my daughter's hand."

"I like you, you come of the best blood in America, you hold a high rank for one of your age, which I believe is thirty—"

"Just thirty, sir."

"You are said to be very rich, and I like you as a man, an officer and a prospective son-in-law."

"But to get rid of a suitor once, for my daughter's hand, I told him he could have her when he showed to me he was worth two million dollars."

"He asked me if I would make the same proviso with other suitors, and I said yes."

"Who was he, may I ask?"

"One by the name of Duluth, and a superb seaman, and a splendid-looking man, refined, educated, but poor."

"Did you know aught regarding him?"

"Nothing, for I met him in a shipping-office in England when I went to buy or charter a vessel to bring my household goods and servants to America."

"I have since written to the shipping merchants asking about him."

"Their reply was a strange one, for they said they had not known him, other than that he had shortly before come into their office to negotiate for a brig he desired to purchase."

"Hearing my conversation with them, after my departure he had bought my charter from them, and, as a stranger, they had demanded the price of the barque to be deposited with them."

"This he did, and, furnishing his own crew, took the vessel I had selected to the designated place, while I, seeing him in command, and having met him in the office of the shipping-merchants, I naturally thought that he was one of their captains."

"Coming over, he sprung into the sea one night, when a wave bore Queen overboard, and saved her life, and this naturally made us most friendly toward him."

"But upon arriving off this coast, one night of storm, we were driven, as I believed, into the bay here, and seeing the fearful dangers we seemed to have passed through by accident, I determined to make my home here, and accordingly did so."

"But, to my surprise, my young captain told me he had run us into the bay, knowing these waters well, and more, he asked me for the hand of my daughter, and I told him he should have it when he matched her wedding from me with a like amount—two million dollars—and I also put the same restriction upon others; but with you, of course, there will be no difficulty about it."

"No, Count Delorme, my fortune is more than a match for Miss Delorme's dowry; but have you heard nothing from this strange man since?"

"Nothing."

"What was his name?"

"Bianca Duluth."

"A mixture of Spanish and French."

"Yes."

"And if I match Miss Delorme's fortune, when she is twenty you will give her to me?"

"Certainly; it is my wish that she shall be your wife."

"And Harvey?"

"What of him?"

"He will enter the field as my rival, I am confident."

"He must meet the requirement of two million dollars."

"Then that ends his hopes and aspirations."

"And now, Count Delorme, after my very satisfactory talk with you, I think it best for me to depart, and I will do all in my power to win Miss Queen, and feel that success will crown my efforts."

The count urged the young officer to continue his visit, but Preble Bainbridge deemed it best that he should go, and, after having taken dinner at the mansion, his coach and four rolled around to the door, and getting into the elegant vehicle, the driver cracked the whip and the spirited horses set out upon their return to Boston.

A halt at night at a country inn, an early start the next morning, and an order to the driver to push along, brought them to Biddeford in good time, and where Captain Bainbridge informed his coachman and footman that he meant to rest a while.

But, after putting up at the village inn, and ordering the best room in it, the young officer received from his host a good saddle-horse, and, with seemingly no idea of fatigue, rode off at a rapid pace.

His way led toward the coast, and, after leaving the village, he took a slip of paper from his pocket and consulted it.

"I am right, and I only hope to find him at the rendezvous," he muttered, and he urged his horse rapidly on.

It was near sunset when he came in sight of the coast, and still following certain directions upon his memoranda, he made his way toward an inlet, where, mingled with the tree-tops, could be seen the topmasts of a vessel.

Entering the heavy pine forest that lay before him, a mere path led him through it for

half a mile, and he came out upon a sheet of water, the shores of which were heavily wooded.

Upon the bank stood a small cabin of logs, and not far away, moored against the bank, for the water of the inlet was deep, was a clumsy-looking craft, in fact a coast-lugger of that day.

Upon the deck were visible half a dozen men, several more were lying upon the pine straw on the bank, and another man was seated in a rustic chair before the cabin.

This man arose and advanced toward the young officer as he rode up, and a glance at the former was sufficient to recognize the helmsman of the boat which had given chase to Queen Delorme, and been thwarted by Henry Harvey.

That the two had met before, was certain from their greeting, and there was surely some strange mystery in this rendezvous between Captain Preble Bainbridge and the kidnappers.

CHAPTER XVII.

NOTHING TO WIN.

"WELL, my man, I am lucky in finding you here, for I feared you might not have arrived," said Captain Preble Bainbridge, as he joined the man before the cabin, and threw himself from his horse.

The one he addressed was the man who had held the helm of the boat which had so hotly pursued Queen Delorme, until one of the oarsmen had been killed by the young sailor, when he had sprung to the oar thus left vacant and continued the chase.

He had a hard face, wore his hair and beard cropped close, and both were fiery red, in strange contrast to his dark complexion and black eyes.

He was dressed as an ordinary seaman, and looked a villain, and one to be dreaded.

In response to Captain Bainbridge, he replied:

"Ah, yes, captain, I saw the plot was ruined, so come to the rendezvous."

"I'm sorry, but it wasn't my fault."

"I heard just how it all happened, and do not blame you as much as I otherwise would had not Lieutenant Harvey arrived on the scene."

"He's a bold one, cap'n, and no mistake, for it hain't often you find one man as will tackle five; but then I guess he's in love with the girl."

"He never saw her before in his life."

"Do you mean it, that he did all that from just sheer pluck, to save the girl?"

"I do; but give me your version of the affair, so that I can compare the two statements."

"Well, cap'n, we sailed up to the island you suggested, and I might as well tell you just here, I'd not anchor off that island at night, or put foot on it, for the price of my craft."

"Why?"

"It's haunted."

"Nonsense! do you believe those wild stories they tell on the coast?"

"Do they tell stories about it?" eagerly asked the man.

"Yes, they say it is haunted."

"Well, I didn't know they said that; but it is."

"Nonsense! you have heard the story that a vessel was wrecked there one night in a storm, and all hands perished, so that they say it is haunted by their spirits."

"No, cap'n. I never was on this coast but once before, for I runs south o' Boston, to York, and Baltimore; but we all saw a spirit wal'king calmly about among the trees."

"The boys wanted to get up anchor at once, saying no good would come to us; but your fee was a generous one, and I wasn't to be scared off, and so we remained."

"The ghost, or spirit, or spook, whatever it may be, walked up to a rock and calmly looked at us."

"It was a big man, dressed in his shroud, and his face was that white as a corpse, while he waved his hand for us to get off."

"I wouldn't go, for it was daylight, and I'm only afraid of spooks at night, and then he walked back and disappeared among the trees."

"Well, cap'n, the men were bringing such a pressure on me, that I determined to go in a boat to the mansion, and get to see the young lady, and in some way, capture her, for it was pretty near time for you to be on board, as you said, and come out and capture her."

"It was a nice little plan for you to win her love, for we had our pistols loaded only with powder, to fire on you, and several of the lads had their orders to play dead and wounded, and when you took the lady from us by force, and escaped to your boat, we were to put to sea."

"But we watched for your carriage to come along the road, right where it borders the shore, and then we saw the lady coming out alone in her skiff."

"This was our chance, and good luck, so we meant to capture her, and then run in to a small island and wait for your carriage to come in sight, when you could see us, spring out, get into one of the fishermen's skiffs on the shore, and come for us."

"I say it was a fine little plot, cap'n, only it did not work out as we expected, for your carriage didn't appear at the set time, and—"

"No, I broke a spring, and had to stop at a shop a couple of hours to get it repaired, while, as I could not get a horse, or saddle, to come on alone, I was forced to remain there."

"This kept me back, and bitterly I cursed my

bad luck; but, as it was, I would have been behind the fellow who rescued her," said Preble Bainbridge in a fretful tone.

"Yes, and he did in earnest, just what you was paying big money to pretend to do, and he may win the girl, for he's a likely looking chap, and has got more nerve than belongs to one man."

"I have nothing to say against his nerve, or his good looks; but he shall not have the lady."

"That's business; but to go on with my story, sir."

"I started in chase of the girl—"

"The lady, sir?"

"As you wish, cap'n, only in my class in life we is not so particular."

"But we started after the lady, and she is the best one at the oars I ever saw among her sex, and she led us a merry chase."

"But we pushed on, and gained, and we would have caught her, if we hadn't made a mistake in crossing the reef, which I now know she was aiming for us to do, for we'd have knocked the bottom out of our boat, where her light skiff would have skimmed over."

"But out came a hail to her from an island, and then there shot into view that plucky young chap in uniform."

"Now my money is ready to say that he can outrun any man I ever knew, for his skiff just left the water at every pull he gave, and he seemed to set it down about two lengths from where he picked it up."

"That's the way it seemed to us."

"Then, we saw matters were crowding, he called out to the girl—lady, to luff ship, and he'd take her off."

"And she obeyed, while he raised a rifle and fired."

"It was my brother he killed, cap'n, and he picked out our strongest man, it looked like."

"He shot him clean through the heart, and, with a shriek I will never forget, Brother Sam leaped overboard and went out o' sight."

"But money was what I was working for, and so I seized Sam's oars, and we kept on in chase."

"It was no use, for the young officer had gotten the lady in his skiff, and he was coming those same pick-up-and-set-down strokes and gained on us, one against four."

"I would have forgiven him, if that was all, but he just led us into the same trap the girl—lady, had intended, and the boat's bottom were knocked clean off by the reef."

"But we swam to the deserted yacht, and put for our craft, which was coming to meet us, for the lads on board had seen the ghost again and so lit out."

"Well, cap'n, we had done our duty, and so squared away to come here and await your coming on your way to Boston."

"How did you know I was going to Boston?" quickly asked Bainbridge.

"I know you, cap'n, though the men don't."

"You know who I am?"

"I do, sir."

"Who?"

"You are an officer in the navy and you are a son of the rich old judge they call Prince Bainbridge, on account of his being so immensely wealthy."

Preble Bainbridge bit his lips in a vexed way, and he responded.

"How did you know this, for it was in Newport that I sought you?"

"Yes, cap'n, but you are a man to remember, when seen once, and I had caught sight of you several times when in Boston, and asked who you were."

"Well, I suppose there is no use denying my identity; but the others must not know, and it will pay you to keep the secret."

"Now let me say that I have brought the balance of your money, and I will pay you, though our little plot failed."

"Thank you, sir."

"And I wish your further services."

"I am ready, sir."

"You should have a better sailing-vessel than that old tub."

"Cap'n, looks are often deceiving, and you never saw it demonstrated more than that craft can do it."

"She looks homely, and I admit she hasn't got much beauty about her; but I never saw a craft that could beat her on any point of sailing, and she walks right away from the New York and Boston Pilot Boats."

"Then she does belie her looks: but I wish to win when I have made up my mind to do so, and I wish you to help me."

"Now I wish no harm to my rival, as I feel that young officer who killed your poor brother, will be, but I do not intend that he shall run off with my lady-love."

"I will watch matters awhile, and if things look serious, I wish you to kidnap him and keep him out of sight until the lady is my wife, and then you can let him go; but it must be done upon the plea of mistaking him for some one else, so that I can never be suspected."

"I understand, cap'n."

"How much does your coasting cost you a month?"

"Well, cap'n, for regular work I only have

four men with me, while I engaged five men for this job of yours."

"Well, your expenses are what?"

"Twenty dollars a man per month, with provisions found, and the wear and tear of the craft, which is about fifty dollars a month."

"Then come my services, as I reckon them against myself, at fifty dollars, and I calculate to save as much more on freights."

"Well, to pay, for five men, you need two hundred and fifty dollars a month?"

"Or thereabout, sir."

"I wish you to get a crew of six men besides yourself, and keep them ready for me at a moment's notice."

"I will give you five hundred dollars a month for your services, your craft and your crew, and, when you accomplish what I set you to do, I'll give you a thousand dollars in cash."

"It's a bargain, cap'n, and I thank you."

"Now make Portland your headquarters, and, to avoid suspicion from idleness, run cargoes you can easily get rid of between that port and Portsmouth and Kennebec."

"I understand, cap'n."

"Your name is—"

"Skipper Nick Noland—the boys call me Cap'n Nick—o' the coasting schooner Surprise."

"Very well, my man, here is your money, and I give you a bonus of a hundred dollars upon the arrangement between us."

"Leave your address at the Falmouth Inn in Portland, just where you can be found; good-by."

And wheeling on his heel, Preble Bainbridge mounted his horse and rode rapidly back to the village, for night was coming on.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VICTIM OF TREACHERY.

A DRIFT in an open boat a man crouched, his face livid, his eyes sunken, and an expression of torture, and mental anguish as well, stamped upon every feature of his expressive countenance.

His form seemed also to feel the physical and mental strain upon him, and even his human nature, seemingly so strong, could not much longer sustain life if some relief did not soon come.

In that man, alone in a boat adrift upon the wide ocean, without sail or oars, one could hardly recognize the Convict Captain, he who had escaped from his life-long sentence in prison, and, boarding the yacht at anchor not far away, had tempted the men to be faithless to their trust and go with him to an island where riches could be obtained for all.

The Convict Captain had kept his part of the compact, and after a long time at sea, through good and ill winds, he had reached the island among the Bahamas, where he said the treasure lay hidden.

Search had proven that it was no hallucination of the brain, disordered by long imprisonment, for the riches were found, riches far above the expectation of the yacht's crew who had gone with him.

He had done his part; the island was found, the treasure secured and placed on board, and the yacht had set sail for a Northern port, where she could hide until each man got away with his share of treasure.

There was a large quantity of gold, silver money, and bags of jewelry and gems.

It represented a vast sum, and certainly had the appearance of having been the treasure of some pirate.

It had cost much bloodshed, many heart-aches, tears and sinning, and it had been hidden away upon that desolate island, some day to be recovered.

Still, as the reader knows, years had passed, and yet it remained, guarded only by the slave that had been ordered by his master to remain and await his return.

Some one had discovered the secret, for it was known to the Convict, who had remained three years in prison, and he had gone thither to recover it.

He had met with success, and, upon leaving the island had set to work to share with his crew, as he had promised to do.

He seemed to know well the value of gems, jewelry and foreign coins, for there was in the treasure gold and silver money of all nations of the earth.

He had told out for himself, mostly in gems, a vast sum, until he felt that he had a margin to spare over what they would bring at a sale.

"There lies my fortune, and it is a vast one, for it amounts to a trifle over two million dollars," he said, as he sat in his cabin, looking over the booty, while the yacht held on her way northward.

But keen eyes were upon him from the deck above, and his every movement was seen.

"Here," he continued, "is the balance of the booty."

"Let me see; it is worth about four hundred thousand dollars, and thus each man will get about sixty-five thousand dollars, as there are six of them."

"I said a hundred thousand each, but then I thought there was more, and they must be satis-

fied, for I can do with no less than *two millions for my share*.

"No; that sum has been in my thoughts by day, my dreams by night, for three years."

"Now I have it, and I am happy."

The crew had nothing, and they get a fortune, each man, and if not quite as much, they must be satisfied."

So he decided, so he talked, unconsciously aloud.

And so was he seen by watchful eyes, heard by attentive ears, and the crew of six men held a council together.

And on sailed the yacht, until the Convict Captain said one afternoon:

"Men, we should sight the Boston Lighthouse before dawn, and then we can run into a hiding-place in the bay, and readily transfer our booty into money."

"Why do you go to Boston?" asked the one who had been sailing-master, before the Convict Captain took command of the yacht.

"Because it is a better place to get rid of our booty, and for hiding away in the yacht," was the reply.

There was no response, and the Convict Captain, upon whom the duties devolved most heavily, of sailing the vessel, retired to his cabin.

Taking out his gold and jewels, he gloated over them, repeating over and over again:

"Two millions of dollars! Two millions! just what I need."

He had given the men each one their share, and they had received it without a murmur.

At last, tired out he had sought rest, little dreaming that again he was to be a victim of man's inhumanity to man.

But so it was, and, with a small bag of gold, a couple of days' provisions, and a good-by, he was set adrift upon the sea in a sailless, oarless boat, while the men he had enriched sailed on, taking all for themselves.

But there was a doom crowding yet upon them, which will be revealed in good time, and the curses of the deserted man rung loud in their ears as they sped on leaving him to his fate.

"My millions gone from me!" he groaned in anguish, as he saw the yacht disappear in the distance.

"I was doomed by the false oath of that infernal pirate, to an imprisonment for life."

"I served for three years, in my dismal cell, when lo, some strange priest comes to see me, and proves my friend."

"He leaves me a Bible, so the keepers believed; but within its leaves, where the center of the pages were cut out, he left me the means of escape."

"Father Adolpho, he said his name was, and he told the keepers he was an old friend of mine."

"Yet I knew him not, and yet he helped me to gain my freedom."

"And I gained it, secured the yacht, kept my word with those devils, and here I am."

"Alas! alas! is my life thus to end after all the past?"

He bowed his head in despair, and his whole frame shook with emotion.

Thus the night passed away, and day and night followed until starvation and death were upon him.

Turning his haggard eyes over the sea, he suddenly cried in a voice that arose to a shriek:

"A sail! a sail! God guide her this way!"

Springing to his feet he shouted in a voice of thunder:

"Sail ho! schooner ahoy! ahoy!"

Reeling he fell in a deep swoon in the bottom of the boat, but he had been seen by those on the vessel, and when he awoke to consciousness he was lying in the handsome cabin of an armed craft, and bending over him was *Caspar the Corsair*.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STOWAWAY.

BACK to the little Bahama island, whereon had been left the treasure, guarded by the Black Hermit, the faithful Congo, I must ask the reader to accompany me for awhile.

The slave had seen the yacht coming toward the island, it will be remembered, and had noted that her course lay directly toward the inlet.

It might be his master returning, and it might be foes, others who knew the island.

So he hastened to his cabin, scraped together certain signs of his living there, or that would indicate that any one had lately dwelt there, and sought refuge in a hiding-place.

This was a cave in the top of a rock, and from this point of lookout he could see the interior of the island, the inlet harbor, the hiding-place of the treasure, and all that occurred near.

He placed some jagged rocks along on the top of the pinnacle, to give him peep-holes in various directions, and he felt no fear of being discovered, as it was only by accident that he had found the cave, or rather hollow in the rock, from having shot a bird on the wing one day, and had it fall there.

Climbing up to get it, he reached the place with difficulty, to discover the opening.

At once he saw that it would be a good hiding-place, should any one visit the island, and he carried thither certain articles he might need, should he be forced to remain there for several days.

He also made a rope fast within, leaving the other end without, so he could readily ascend the side of the steep rock.

On the vessel that had been wrecked, and which he had chopped up for wood, had been weapons and ammunition, and these had served Congo well in securing him birds to eat now and then.

From some fancy of his own, Congo seemed to like to delve into the superstitious and mysterious, and he amused himself by making up a costume that certainly made him appear like Satan himself.

In this he was wont to parade about the island, solely for his own amusement, at times; but had a vessel touched there and seen him, they would have at once set the isle down as the abode of Old Nick himself, and hastened away in terror.

When, therefore, Congo discovered the yacht standing in toward the island, he collected his traps and sought the rock-cave hiding-place.

He soon discovered the yacht running in, and knew that whoever was at the helm had been before to the island.

When the vessel dropped anchor, Congo waited and watched.

He saw the people land, but dared not reveal himself, as he did not recall the face of one of them.

He knew that his master had not returned for him, and, did he show himself, he might be set upon and killed.

So he remained concealed, and closely watched every move the men made.

He saw them search the island, and he knew that they must be looking for the treasure.

"Perhaps my master after all was not lost, and sent them," he muttered.

Then he saw them discover the treasure, and he trembled with excitement.

What could he do?

At last a bright thought struck him, for his face lighted up, and gathering together his things, he hastily slid down from his hiding-place, and ran toward the shore.

"If the treasure goes, I go with it!" he said, and he stepped into the boat.

He knew that no one was on board the yacht, and she was lying so close to the shore, that he could, without unfastening the boat, step on the deck.

This he hastily did, and he went into the cabin.

The vessel was handsomely fitted up, and there were, besides the cabin aft, two state-rooms for the owner and his guests.

The African saw that two of these were doubtless used by the officers of the vessel, a third was empty, and the fourth was evidently a lumber-room, for there were various things stowed away there.

Under the berth the negro dragged himself, along with his traps, having taken the precaution to lock the door and take the key.

He also arranged the things stowed there, so as to completely hide him, and made himself as comfortable as possible, placing the provisions and water he had brought with him near for use.

"I've got enough to last me two weeks, and I can starve a week more, and we should reach some port in that time."

"If I'm found, I'll have to take the consequences, and if I am not, I can make my escape when we reach port, and get some of the treasure, too," he muttered, as he arranged himself comfortably in his hiding-place.

He heard the crew return; he listened to their excited talk over the discovered treasure, and he heard one say:

"Put it in this state-room."

A hand was upon the knob, and it turned, and a voice said:

"Some one has locked it, get a key."

"No, put it in the other one on the port side, for it is vacant," a commanding voice ordered, and then Congo breathed more freely.

He heard the treasure put away; the one who seemed to be the leader said:

"I'll take the key, men, and make the division as we sail northward, for we'll have plenty of time before we reach port."

Then Congo knew that the treasure was safe on board, his presence was not suspected, and the yacht was heading for the northward.

At night when all was quiet he would get out from under the berth, stretch himself, and sleep comfortably until morning, when he would crawl back into his cramped quarters once more.

Thus he heard all that was said in the cabin, and when the men were talking forward in their quarters, and the Convict Captain on deck, he learned much of just what had taken the yacht to the Bahamas, the circumstances under which she had gone, and who they were on board.

He overheard the Convict Captain say that he must have two million, and divide the other shares off for the crew, and he wondered greatly

who this strange man was that had known of the existence of the treasure on the island, and had so successfully secured it.

Then the negro heard mutterings against the leader, and he felt that trouble was brewing.

Fortunately for him the yacht was running well and nearing her destination, for his food was getting low, and he felt the close confinement he was in.

One afternoon when the wind was light, he heard the mutiny break forth and what followed.

His sympathies were with the Convict Captain and against the men whom he had enriched, and he longed to save him, yet dared not.

Soon after night came on, and Congo had made up his mind to act, for he had hit upon a scheme, which was to rig himself out in his diabolical costume, which had been his pride upon the island.

Thus it was, when the mutineers were rejoicing over their fortune, what appeared to them to be Satan himself suddenly appeared before them, and in their wild alarm they sprung into the sea.

To thus get rid of the men without a struggle was far more than Congo had expected; but he paid no heed to them, sprung to the helm, and held the vessel once more on her course, while he said, as he glanced back over the moonlit waters:

"The treasure is in my keeping once more, and I will look up that man they set adrift, save him from death, discover who he is, and then we will seek some other hiding-place for it.

"A slave, I dare not possess it, but he can, and—well, I'll take the future as it comes."

So saying, he put back to try and find the drifting boat in which was the Convict Captain, and seemingly without a thought of the mutineers who had sprung to their doom in the sea.

CHAPTER XX.

THE STORM PHANTOM.

AFTER Henry Harvey left the magnificent mansion of Count Leon Delorme, he sailed swiftly along on his way to his own home.

His light skiff fairly skimmed over the waters, and knowing the bay thoroughly as he did, he mechanically evaded all the dangerous rocks and reefs.

With the breeze in his favor, and blowing strong, he made the run in little over an hour, and landed at last on the shore of a pretty little cove, with banks retreating upward to a timber-covered hill.

In the timber glimmered a bright light, and making his boat fast, the young officer took up his rifle and ascended the hill.

He reached a white paling fence, and a large dog greeted him with a welcome bark, and instantly the door of the house was opened and a female form stood in the bright light.

It was a pleasant house, and an old-fashioned home, very substantial and very comfortable, and, fronting to the south it commanded a fine view of the island-spangled bay and the sea far beyond.

There was a large vegetable garden upon one side of the house, a flower garden on the other, and a lawn in front, with heavy timber in the rear, where were the out-houses of the farm.

Altogether it was a most home-like dwelling, and if not compared with Cloudland Castle and its estate, was a charming abode.

The one who met the young man at the door was a sweet-faced matron of fifty, and she said earnestly:

"Ah, Harry, I am so glad you are home, for father and myself were growing anxious about you."

"Yes, son, you did not expect to stay so late, and we waited supper for you," said Captain Harvey, a hale, fine-looking old gentleman of fifty-five, who sat in an easy-chair near the table.

"I am sorry I alarmed you, mother, but it was unavoidable, as I will explain, and I have been to supper, though I will sit down with you while you have yours."

"Been to supper, Harry?" said his mother.

"Yes, mother, I took tea at Cloudland Castle."

"Oh Harry!"

"Why Harry!"

Such were the exclamations of the old couple, for it was seldom that any of the natives ever enjoyed the honor of a meal in Cloudland Castle.

Then Henry Harvey told his parents all about his adventures of the afternoon, and they were amazed, and delighted at the happy termination of the affair, while Mrs. Harvey said:

"The young lady is very beautiful, Harry, for I have seen her at the village church several times, and then she has passed here on horseback, and always had a sweet smile and a bow for me, though we have never had an introduction."

"Yes, she is called an angel, while her father is a stern, sad-faced man that no one seems to be able to get acquainted with," added Captain Harvey.

"I have heard that she was engaged to

Preble Bainbridge, but Heaven forbid! for he is a wild fellow," Mrs. Harvey remarked.

"He was there to-night, having driven up from Boston in his carriage; but, mother, how near is the relationship existing between Preble Bainbridge and me?"

"Well, his mother was my third cousin, Harry; but we hardly claim kinship, and they are too proud and rich to notice us," said Mrs. Harvey.

It was late when the three retired for the night, but Henry Harvey was up bright and early the next morning, and all that day he found it hard work not to take a run down the bay toward Cloudland Castle.

The next day he said he desired to see if Miss Delorme had suffered any ill effects from her alarm, and so he sprung into his boat and sailed down to the castle.

The welcome he received from both the count and Queen made him feel at home, and he was glad to find that Preble Bainbridge had departed.

Thus it went on, as the days passed, Henry Harvey often going to Cloudland Castle, and always meeting with a warm welcome.

He sailed with Queen about the bay, rode horseback with her through the country, and rainy days they played chess, read, or sung together in the parlor.

One afternoon Henry Harvey, Queen and Count Delorme were seated in the Overlook Arbor, watching a storm that was slowly rising from seaward, and also gazing upon a small vessel out upon the waters, some half a league beyond the Haunted Island.

It was a graceful yacht, small, trim-looking, painted white, and with her foresail, mainsail and jib set.

She was cruising along slowly, for the wind was very light, and yet not a soul was visible upon her decks.

"It is a weird-looking craft, to be going along without a human being upon her," said Count Delorme, gazing at her through his glass.

"If I was at sea, and saw her as she is now, I do not believe I could get any of my crew to board her," Henry Harvey responded.

And so they watched the strange yacht, and the rising storm until sunset.

As the vessel got opposite to the overlook arbor, she suddenly put about, apparently without the aid of human means, and stood back over her own wake.

It certainly was a strange sight, and, deeply interested in the little vessel, now that darkness was coming on, and the storm was threatening to break any moment, the count called for a servant, sent for maps, and they determined to remain and see the outcome of it all.

"I have done wrong in not going out to sea, and running her into a safe anchorage, for see, she will go down under that tempest.

"Ha! I will go now to her aid, for some one is on board!" and, unheeding the call of Count Delorme, and the entreaty of Queen to remain, Henry Harvey left the arbor, and hastened rapidly down the cliff steps to his surf-skiff on the shore, and in which he had that day sailed up to the castle, fearing a storm might overtake him.

"He will go to his death!" cried Queen, anxiously.

"Not he, for he knows these waters as no other man does," was the count's reply.

A few moments more and the little surf-skiff under sail, shot out from the shadow of the cliff toward the Haunted Island, which was a league distant nearly.

But, hardly had it gone half the distance when with terrific roar, and livid lightning, with peals of thunder and howling winds the tempest swept landward from the sea.

"The strange craft will go down under this blast," cried the count.

"Oh, God! and so will the surf-skiff," groaned Queen.

Then the father and daughter, appalled by the fury of the tempest strained their eyes out over the waters.

"That craft is a *Storm Phantom!*"

The count fairly yelled the words, and pointed as he spoke out upon the sea.

There, enveloped in a weird light, driving directly upon the Haunted Island, was the strange craft, while, strangest of all, and visible by the spectral light there stood at the helm *what appeared to be his Satanic Majesty himself*.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN SUSPENSE.

WITH eyes that never flinched Queen Delorme stood in the Overlook Arbor, her gaze out upon the black waters, now and then seemingly set on fire by the livid flames of the lightning which sweeping down from the inky clouds, seemed to lap up with fiery tongue the spray that leaped heavenward under the blast of the winds.

The thunder pealed like fleets of ships of the line in battle, and the iron-bound coast seemed to rock under the shocks of the beating sea.

The weird craft, with its spectral light had fascinated both the count and Queen, as it dashed on, borne on the point of the tempest, directly upon the Haunted Island.

That strange form at the helm, the size of a

man, yet looking like a devil, held their gaze spellbound.

The count was superstitious, strangely so, but then those were days when men believed in weird sights, and supernatural deeds being done, and even Queen was not wholly free from the failings of the day.

To see a vessel that had seemingly had no crew on board, stand off and on in the face of the approaching storm, and then, when the tempest struck it, soon after night, to become enveloped in a spectral, greenish light, that lit up her decks, revealing the fact that she was stripped of all sail except a reefed staysail forward, and at her helm a being or demon, was enough to stagger a skeptic.

And on they saw the vessel drive, seemingly borne upon the crest of the wall of foam that rushed on with the tempest, and it was heading directly for the Haunted Island.

That fact in itself was enough to make one shudder, for the Haunted Island was daily becoming a greater object of dread to the dwellers along the coast, and stranger stories than ever were told in the cabins regarding a spirit even in daylight having been seen upon the isle.

Of course the count and Queen had heard all these stories, and the former was rather given to believing what he heard, and seeing the strange craft, which he had called a *Storm Phantom*, rushing directly upon the island, and with what appeared to be Satan at the helm, he more than ever was convinced that spirits haunted the isle.

Watching the little vessel, they saw it dash right into the wild surf, bounding upon the reef-chain that encircled the island, and then the spectral light went out suddenly and the craft disappeared.

"She has dashed directly upon the island, passing through the reef at the opening known as *Purgatory Gate*, father," cried Queen, excitedly.

"Well, that craft can go anywhere, my child; but see, there goes the surf-skiff, for I saw it by that flash of lightning.

A cry of joy broke from Queen's lips, and she riveted her gaze out upon the black waters.

Breathlessly the father and daughter awaited for another flash of lightning that might reveal to them the surf-skiff.

Soon it came, seeming to lick up the very waters as it skimmed over them, and the surf-skiff was again visible.

"He has taken in his sail," cried the count.

"Yes, and is rowing! I saw him distinctly," Queen returned.

"He was not coming back, Queen?"

"No, father, he was heading directly for the Haunted Island," was the hoarsely-whispered response.

"Great God! he is doomed if he goes there," the count cried, in real alarm.

"Yet he will go, father?"

"Yes, nothing can stop him now; but how he lived out that tempest, Heaven only knows!"

"He had his surf-skiff."

"That was enough to destroy a thousand surf-skiffs, yes, a ship of the line, and he caught it fairly, for he is only now getting under the lee of the island."

"He is utterly fearless, father."

"Utterly so, and a very remarkable man, Queen."

"I only wish he was as rich as Captain Bainbridge."

"Why, father?"

"I have certain reasons for it."

"Riches would make him no more of a man, father."

"It still would be better did he have vast wealth, Queen; but see! there is his skiff, almost up to the island."

"I saw it distinctly by that flash."

"So did I, sir; but do you fear aught will happen to him now?"

"I do."

"What?"

"I do not know."

"Why do you believe it?"

"The island is haunted, my child."

"Do you really believe in that story, father?"

"Have you not just seen a storm phantom dash upon it?"

"I have just seen something happen, father, that is a mystery I cannot solve in my mind by any reasoning."

"Then you should feel that the island is haunted."

"I have heard many weird stories to that effect, sir, but always looked upon them as old fireside tales."

"I know it to be haunted, Queen."

"You do, father?"

"Yes."

"May I ask how you know it, sir?"

"From observation, my child."

"Do you mean for me to believe that you have seen a ghost there?"

"I do."

"Father!"

"One day, Queen, I took your yacht and sailed out over the bay."

"I ran close in toward the Haunted Island to get a good look at it, and while peering into the dark pine timber upon it, I distinctly beheld a

tall form, clad in white, walking toward the shore.

"I was amazed, and then alarmed; but I hailed it, and asked:

"Who are you?"

"No response came, and I asked:

"Are you living or dead?"

"No response came, but the arms waved me off, and Queen, I would not have cared just then if this tempest had come up to take me away from the vicinity of that island."

"This is a remarkable story, father!"

"It is indeed, my child; but I pledge you my honor it is a true one."

"I cannot doubt you, father—but see! that flash revealed the surf-skiff running right into the shore of the Haunted Island."

"He will need all his nerve, bold as he is, if he puts foot on that island," said the count emphatically.

"Heaven preserve him," fervently rejoined Queen.

The tempest had now worn itself out for its fury was spent.

The skies were still black with clouds, and the thunder rolled incessantly, but it grew further and further off each moment.

The lightning was far less frequent, and its vividness was fading away, while the wind had fallen to half a gale.

But the waves of the sea could be heard pounding away upon the island barriers at a terrific rate and with a tremendous roar, and the waters of the bay were tossed about savagely, and fell with heavy force upon the shore below the cliff.

With the next vivid flash of lightning, both Queen and her father, holding their glasses to their eyes, beheld the surf-skiff upon the shore, drawn far up out of reach of the waters; but Henry Harvey was not visible, and the count said in an awed kind of a way:

"That daring fellow has landed and gone into the island."

"Yes, he saw the strange craft dashing toward it from the sea, and he is determined to discover what it meant," returned Queen.

"And his life will be the forfeit," was the response of the count.

"No, father, I believe he will return in safety," and the two left the arbor and returned to the mansion.

But neither cared for much supper, both were impressed with what they had seen, and sat in silent thought listening to the winds skurrying around the house.

Thus they remained in the library for a long while, to suddenly start as a loud knock was heard on the outer door, when some one sought admission.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SPECTER OF THE ISLE.

THE ringing of the heavy brass knocker upon the front door, fairly startled both Queen and her father, and aroused the attendant in livery from a sound nap, and in alarm.

Collecting his scattered senses as quickly as he could, he went to the door and Henry Harvey entered.

He wore his storm suit, which he had had in his surf-skiff, and they were dripping wet; but he placed them aside and was met at the library door by the count, who said earnestly:

"It is you then, Harvey, and not your ghost."

"I am my natural self, Count Delorme, though I assure you I have seen that to night which I was a skeptic as to the existence of," and the young sailor entered the handsome library, when Queen came forward and grasping his hand said warmly:

"Thank Heaven, you have returned in safety."

"I was fortunate in doing so, from more than one cause, I assure you; but I have something to tell that may interest you, Miss Delorme, as well as your father."

"You are in need of refreshments first, so come into the dining-room and have something to eat," said Queen.

"You need something to drink more, Harvey, for I can see that you have had a rough time of it," and the count placed a decanter of brandy before the young man, who, being a sailor, and Maine not being a prohibition State at that time, took a generous drink of it.

Having partaken of some food and a cup of hot coffee, Henry Harvey began the story of his adventures, for they had returned to the library.

"This was the wildest storm I ever saw on this coast, though it lasted hardly an hour," he said.

"I found that out before my skiff had gone far, and was forced to take in even my 'hand-kerchief sail,' as I call the little bit of canvas I thought the surf-skiff would carry under any circumstances.

"If I had been outside, where the reefs did not break the waves, and the island check the wind, I would have been swamped."

"But I took to my oars, held the bow into the teeth of the hurricane, and, in lulls, forced the skiff on, though it was the hardest pull of my life."

"Why did you not put back?" asked Queen.

"I never give up an undertaking, Miss De-

lorme, until I know I am beaten, and I did not feel that I was."

"The skiff held up well, and so I kept on and reached the island."

"We saw your boat drawn up on the shore," said the count.

"Indeed! you were watching me, then?" and Henry Harvey cast a quick glance at Queen, who answered:

"Yes, we remained in the Overlook until we saw that you had reached the island in safety; but we did not consider your danger as half over then, after what we saw from the cliff."

"What did you see, Miss Delorme?" calmly asked the young sailor.

"The strange craft that you started out to aid."

"You saw her after the storm struck her?"

"Yes; did not you?"

"I did; and I saw her drive directly upon the island; then I was so low down in the waters, I could only catch sight of her spars when there came a flash of lightning."

"Did you note a peculiar light about the craft?"

"No, sir."

"We did; but then you must have had the island between you at that time."

"Doubtless, for I saw no light; but she seemed to be heading directly for the break in the reef known as the Purgatory Gate."

"She passed through it, and then we lost sight of her, and she was dashed to pieces upon the island."

"So I believed, Count Delorme, and yet I went over to the sea-shore and not a sign of a wreck was visible."

"Had she passed through Purgatory Gate, she would have been dashed directly upon the rocks known as Old Nick's Teeth, and gone to pieces in an instant."

"But not a spar, timber, piece of sail or anything did I see upon the shore, and I searched it well, for the moon came through the clouds, soon after I reached there."

"Lieutenant Harvey, are you superstitious?" asked the count, in an impressive tone.

"I believe all of us are, sir, to a certain extent."

"Do you believe in the supernatural?"

"I never have done so, since I was a boy, Count Delorme, for I have schooled myself into the belief that such thoughts were utter nonsense."

"But you seem to have had reason to change your belief."

"I have had my skepticism staggered to-night, I admit."

"Well, lieutenant, Queen may tell you just what she saw on board that strange craft, and if she errs I will correct her; but, though we have not compared notes, I feel that we both saw just what happened."

"I am no believer in Satan prowling about, and that the supernatural can happen, Lieutenant Harvey, but I am at a loss to account for what I saw to-night," and Queen told about the weird light on the strange vessel, and what it was that had appeared at the helm, while both she and her father asserted that the vessel drove on, with the speed of the wind, directly into the Purgatory Gate, and, doing so, with the island-shore but a couple of cable-lengths away it could not but be dashed to atoms upon Old Nick's Teeth.

"Now, what did you discover, Harvey?" asked the count

The lieutenant seemed really impressed with the story told, and remained silent a moment before he responded to the question.

Then he said slowly, and thoughtfully:

"I did not see the wreck, or any sign of it on Old Nick's Teeth, or elsewhere upon the island, and it does seem that the vessel partook of the supernatural, not to have been wrecked, and with such a helmsman as you describe, and when I tell you what I saw, you will be also impressed and bewildered to account for it."

"Of course, I have heard of the rumors about the Haunted Island, and, as far back as my father remembers, it has been a death-trap for vessels."

"My father says that fully a score of vessels have gone to pieces upon it, ranging from a fishing-smack to an English vessel-of-war, and in no case have the crew been saved."

"A Spanish vessel-of-war once had the plague break out among its crew, and the commander put a number ashore there, who had the dread disease."

"Some were dying, some quite sick, and others threatened with it: but all were put there, those who were able taking care of the ones who were most ill, and then the cruel commander sailed away and left them to die."

"All of them perished, and this, with the wrecks occurring there, gives the island the name of being haunted."

"There have been those who tell that they have seen spirits walking about the island, even in the daylight; but I have not believed this until to-night."

"Now I can vouch for it that the report is true, for as I went up into the pines on the island and I saw a white form ahead of me."

"I was amazed, but called out, thinking it

was one of the crew of the vessel that had escaped."

"No answer came, and I advanced toward the form; but it kept away from me."

"I hastened on, but it still kept the same distance."

"I ran, yet could get no nearer."

"So I gave it up, and went toward the sea-shore to see about the wreck."

"Getting into an open space where the moonlight fell full upon it, the form seemed to wave me back."

"But I reached the shore, searched it thoroughly, and returned to my boat."

"The man, specter, ghost, or whatever it was, still kept near me, and, as I rowed away, waved after me in silence."

"Such is my experience, Count Delorme, upon the Haunted Island."

Then the count told how he too had seen the specter, and for a long time the three sat trying to solve the mystery; but in vain, for no reasoning would do it.

"I will return to-morrow and search that island thoroughly," said Henry Harvey.

The count urged against it, while Queen remained silent; but Henry Harvey was determined, and they arose to separate for the night, for the young officer was to remain as the count's guest.

Then Queen said:

"Will you make me a promise, Lieutenant Harvey?"

"Certainly, Miss Delorme."

"Will you keep it?"

"I will, most assuredly."

"Then give me your word that you will not visit the Haunted Island."

"Miss Delorme!" said the sailor in surprise.

"I mean what I say, and I have your promise."

"Fairly caught, Harvey, and you will have to obey," said the count.

"I will not break my word to you, Miss Delorme; but I hope to be released from the promise some day," and with this they parted for the night, the young officer glad to seek the rest he so much needed, but annoyed to feel that he could not carry out his intention the following morning and explore the island for its shrouded specter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MOST STRANGELY MET.

WHEN Bianca Duluth, the Convict Captain, as the reader now knows him to have been, awoke to consciousness in the cabin of an armed vessel and beheld standing over him the man whom he believed dead, hanged on the gallows, he believed that he was possessed of a nightmare, and he passed his hands wearily over his forehead.

"Do not be alarmed, Duluth, for you are in good hands, and I am no ghost, I can assure, not having been hanged as many believed," said Captain Caspar quietly.

Removing his hand from his forehead, and looking straight into the face of the pirate, Captain Duluth said slowly:

"You are Caspar the Corsair and no mistake."

"I did believe you dead, and am sorry you were not hanged."

"Don't be severe, Duluth, for had I been you would not now be alive, as your life was flickering out fast when I picked you out of the boat; but I have forced stimulants between your lips, and my surgeon has said you will come round all right."

"It was your vessel then that I saw?"

"Yes."

"I must have swooned before you reached me."

"You did, and it was a swoon akin to death; but you are all right now; I will send the surgeon to you, and when you are able we will have a talk together."

"One question?"

"Yes."

"This is your vessel?"

"It is, so make yourself at home perfectly."

"One word more?"

"Certainly."

"You are a pirate still."

"Assuredly; but now just be careful not to talk and get well as fast you can."

"That you may hang me!"

"Oh no. I like you, and I may do something handsome for you."

"Here is the surgeon," and as the pirate doctor entered the cabin Captain Caspar went on deck.

The vessel was a schooner, and a good one too.

Her hull would have charmed the eye of any seaman, and she was gaunt as a hound, in her hull, sharp as a wedge forward, had an extremely narrow stern, swallow-tail like, and projecting far out over the rudder port.

Her bulwarks were high, very solid, and were pierced for four guns to a side, and the latter were in place.

Her masts were very lofty and her spars very long, the main-boom exceedingly so, and that she could spread a vast amount of sail was evident, while the manner in which she stood up under it, in the fair breeze blowing, showed that

The Convict Captain.

there was good depth of hull and heavy ballast near the keel.

The crew numbered four-score, and were a reckless, determined-looking set of men, dressed in white pants, blue and black striped shirts and red skull-caps.

It was a crew that needed a master, and they had one in Caspar the Corsair.

Duluth had wonderful recuperative powers, and in a day or two he was as good as ever, and so expressed himself to the pirate, who said:

"Well, we can now have a talk, for I am as anxious to learn why you escaped from prison, when you were on a life sentence, as you doubtless are to know how I cheated the hangman."

"I confess to a curiosity on that point," said Duluth.

"And a regret that it is so; but never mind, just tell me about your escape, and my finding you in an open boat at sea."

"I was sentenced, as you know, for life; and through your treachery."

"My dear fellow I was hateful, for in chasing your barque, I got into a scrape with that young officer with his schooner, and so I laid all to you, and therefore was anxious to have you suffer with me."

"Had I had any conscience I would have helped you out of the scrape; but I had not, and you, upon the idea of being caught in bad company, suffered also."

"Now I am very glad that you are not in prison, and to prove it, will say that I intended to get you out."

"You did intend to get me out?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Upon purely selfish motives, for I needed just such a man as you for my first luff, and I felt confident you would prefer a pirate deck to a convict's cell."

"Under existing circumstances I would," was the reply, in a low tone.

"Now to your story."

"I served three years, living in Hades the while, for you know not all that my incarceration cost me, as it was not the loss of liberty alone I had to contend against."

"I was so closely watched, so securely confined that escape was hopeless."

"At last a priest visited me, and he seemed deeply interested in me, and asked if I was not the one who had been sentenced to life imprisonment because you swore I was a pirate."

"I told him the truth, and—"

"You believed me dead the while?"

"Yes, it was reported in the prison that you had been hanged."

"I see; well, who was this priest?"

"He was known to me only as Father Adolpho, and—"

But the Convict paused as the pirate had suddenly sprung to his feet, his face terribly excited.

But almost instantly he regained his composure, and said in his calm way:

"Father Rudolphus, you say his name was?"

"No, Father Adolpho."

"Ah! and he aided you to escape?"

"Yes, and in a most ingenious way, for he said he had known me before, and my mother had sent to me her Bible."

"It was a large book, and I took it from him, little dreaming how priceless its contents were to me."

"He had cut the entire center of the leaves of the book out, leaving a large space, where were files, a rope, hook, and directions regarding the means of escape, and where to go to find clothes when I got out."

"I followed his advice in escaping, but took a vessel I saw at anchor as a means to get away."

"It was a pleasure-craft, a schooner, and there were six men on board."

"I told them that I had been doomed to life imprisonment as a pirate, and that I knew where lay a buried treasure, and would make them rich if they would take me there."

"The very story to catch them."

"It did do so."

"And did you know of such treasure?"

"I did."

"Ah! and how?"

"It matters not."

"And the men went with you?"

"They did."

"Let me guess the rest, from my knowledge of human nature."

"You went to the spot, dug up the booty, shared it with the men, naturally keeping the larger share for yourself, and they, thinking they should have all, put you in the dory, with the little bag of gold that was with you when I found you dying."

"Am I right?"

"You are."

"I understand mankind, you see; but they went their way with your treasure."

"Yes."

"Have you any idea whither they went?"

"Not in the least."

"There were six of them, you say?"

"Yes."

"In a yacht?"

"Yes."

"And they set you adrift how many days before I found you?"

"A week, I believe; but I hardly counted time after I began to starve."

"Well, we may as well give up finding them, though a run along the coast, and a messenger sent into each port, say yourself for instance, to search for the yacht would not be a bad idea."

"It would be a good one, indeed."

"Did they have much booty to dispose of?"

"Two and a half millions."

The pirate sprung to his feet, while he cried:

"Do you mean it, man?"

"I do."

"In what was this fortune?"

"Gold, silver, gems and jewelry, with daggers and swords, the hilts set with precious stones."

"They can only get rid of such a treasure by slow process, so would doubtless keep it on board the yacht until they could thoroughly locate themselves."

"Having stolen the yacht, I think they would fear to keep her longer than necessary, and would doubtless hide their treasure as soon as possible."

"Well, we will begin at Portland and run the ports down to Baltimore, and then up; but if we find the treasure, how much is to be my share?"

"What the six men were to have."

"How much was that?"

"I am forced to have two millions; the balance is for you and your crew."

"I do not complain, for it will be a princely gift, and I can give up piracy; but first to get it."

"Yes; yet I have hope."

"And I— But let me explain my not being hanged, if you care to know why I was not?"

"I would be glad to."

"Well, there was one who came to see me, took my place, and I walked out."

"I had some gems concealed about me, exchanged one for gold, and set out on my travels to start life anew."

"I intended to return to my old life, so drew the model for this vessel, and set the builder to work on it."

"Then I secured a berth as mate on a clipper-ship running from New Orleans to Spain; the captain got lost overboard, and I stepped into his shoes, and one voyage managed to have on board some arms, guns and war munitions for Cuba, with a pretty sum in gold belonging to the Government."

"My schooner was about ready, and so I concluded to act, and captured a small coasting schooner, transferred to her my guns and other things, not forgetting the gold, and then set the crew of the craft on my ship to run her into port."

"My own crew from the ship of course went with me, and finding a good hiding-place, I left my prize there; went after my schooner, paid for her, and took her to the rendezvous."

"You see what a craft she is, and what a fine armament she has, so that, although it took me over two years to get afloat again, as I am today, I do not begrudge the time."

"Now you are my first luff, for if we do not capture your treasure, and it is necessary for you to have two million dollars, this is the best way for you to get it."

"What do you say?"

"If we find my treasure can I go my way?"

"Yes."

"I accept," was the calm reply, and Caspar held out his hand, and Bianca Duluth grasped it in token of his good will.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE FOUR RIVALS.

WHEN Henry Harvey returned home after his night at Cloudland Castle, he found that there was an official order awaiting him, to report for duty within ten days.

This was a surprise to him, and it was a disagreeable one, as he had anticipated a month longer at home with his parents, and to enjoy the society of Queen Delorme.

But duty called and he was forced to obey.

He knew that he loved Queen with his whole soul, and, though he felt that he should not tell her so, on their short acquaintance, he determined to at least ask her father's consent to ask her to become his wife at some future day.

It was with a beating heart that the young officer went to Cloudland Castle, and he showed a nervousness which no peril, however deadly, had caused him to feel, when he met Queen.

He had never said one word of love to her, and yet he could not but show how deeply he was interested in her.

He had rejoiced at her friendly manner toward him, and yet somehow it came into his mind that Preble Bainbridge was a dangerous rival.

True, Queen had never given him reason to think that she cared particularly for Captain Bainbridge, but somehow it seemed that the count had allowed him to feel that his rival was an accepted suitor.

Still, Henry Harvey was determined to know his fate, and he sought an interview with the count.

That Count Delorme liked the young sailor immensely there could be no doubt, and he showed

deep regret when Harvey told him that his orders called him away within a day or so.

"I know not how long I may be absent, Count Delorme," began Henry Harvey, nervously himself for the ordeal.

"And for this reason have sought this interview with you."

"Perhaps it would be more becoming for me to wait yet awhile, as you know so little of me, and what I have to ask of you is of so much moment; but my family are well connected, though we have been quite poor, though comfortable."

"I hold the rank, as you know, of a senior lieutenant, and I hope for promotion in time, and will win it if I can do so."

"I love your daughter, and I ask of you your kind permission to seek to win her love in return, though I assure you I have never spoken to her upon the subject."

Henry Harvey had spoken in a manly way, in a deep, earnest manner that showed he meant all that he said, and the count seemed impressed by his words.

But after a moment of silence he said:

"Lieutenant Harvey, I will be perfectly frank with you, as you have been with me."

"I know that you come of good family, as good as the Bainbridges, with all their boasted pride of birth and riches."

"Your family are poor, and your father has worked hard for a comfortable home and to leave you something when he died."

"You would be my choice for a husband for my daughter, if I had to choose; but there are barriers in the way."

"You have won fame, and deserve it, and you will work your way up rapidly against all odds."

"But you are not the only suitor for my daughter's hand."

"There are two others; and I will explain just how matters stand."

"To one—a sailor, too, by the way—I promised my daughter's hand when he should match her fortune from me with one of equal size."

"He has yet a year nearly to earn it all, for he was a poor man, and that was three years ago."

"To Captain Preble Bainbridge I promised my daughter's hand if he could match her fortune with his own, at the time the decision was to be made."

"To you I make the same promise, and you, like the first suitor, have your fortune to make, while Bainbridge already has vast wealth."

"At the expiration of the time set for the first suitor to claim Queen's hand, when he brings proof of his possessing the requisite riches to do so, I will then leave it to her to decide between you, and take the one she loves, though I must ask you not to speak one word of love to her in the mean time."

"Gladly I make that promise, sir; but may I ask the amount of fortune required to match the riches you will give Miss Delorme?"

"Two million dollars."

Henry Harvey turned pale, his heart sunk within him, and he faintly groaned:

"I can never claim her then!"

"Do not despair, for you know not what may transpire."

"Suppose, for instance, that you should have orders to cruise in your vessel solely against the coast and gulf pirates, it certainly would not take many piratical prizes to make up the sum."

"No, no, do not despair, Harvey."

"I will not despair, sir; I will hope," was the earnest reply, and the interview ended.

Two days after Henry Harvey bade farewell to Queen and the count, parted from his parents, and set out to make a fortune as well as fame.

Hardly had the little coaster that bore him away faded in the distance, when an armed schooner hove in sight.

She headed toward the bay, but anchoring in the offing sent in a boat.

Count Delorme was seated in Overlook Arbor watching the approaching schooner and admiring her beauty, while Queen had gone for a ride on horseback.

"That is as pretty a cruiser as I ever saw, and she carries the American flag."

"Perhaps it is Bainbridge in his new vessel," said the count, as he watched the boat come ashore, and an officer spring out upon the pier.

"No, it is not Bainbridge; who can it be?" and the count arose as an officer in uniform ascended the cliff stairs and approached the arbor.

"Count Delorme, I believe," he said, raising his hat.

But Count Delorme had turned deadly pale as he looked into the strangers' face, and in response said:

"Yes, sir; may I ask whom I have the honor of welcoming?"

"In spite of more than twenty years having passed, Count Delorme, since last we met, I feel that you have not forgotten Caspar Conrad."

"Great God! I feared it!"

"You have cause, my dear count, to fear me, if you do not do as I request, for I have come here to make a demand upon you."

"Well, sir?"

"You married my old lady-love, Hilda Conrad, and, though she is dead, I have learned that you have a beautiful daughter."

"Now I never loved but one woman in my life, she whom you made your wife, and as she is dead, all the affection I had for her, I desire to bestow upon her daughter."

"I am much her senior, I believe, I am known and feared as Caspar the Corsair, but desire to enter the list of her suitors."

"I do not ask you to give her to me without her content; but to allow me to endeavor to win her love."

"To her I must be known only as Captain Caspar Conrad, a Spanish naval officer, and an old friend of yours, and a man of vast wealth, and if I cannot win her heart I will be content, and leave a more successful rival ample sea-room to make her strike her colors."

"Ah! there is a lady on horseback now, and it is doubtless the Senorita Delorme, so remember, introduce me as Captain Conrad of the Spanish Navy, and your old and particular friend," and the pirate smiled sweetly upon Count Delorme, whose face was livid and whose form was quivering with suppressed emotion, as Queen suddenly dashed up to the arbor, mounted upon her spirited horse, and attended by a groom.

CHAPTER XXV.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

HAVING determined to make his search for the fugitive yacht a thorough one, Captain Caspar, the Corsair, set to work in a systematic way.

He found out, as nearly as possible, just where the treacherous crew had cast the Convict Captain adrift, and then the two sat down to consult as to which port the men would most naturally make after their act.

"They would hardly make the Penobscot River, as they certainly could not dispose of any large amount of booty in any of the small Maine towns, and to attempt it would bring suspicion upon them," said Duluth.

"True, and we will therefore give the ports the go-by until we reach Portland, and we will run in there."

"Do you mean that you would enter that port?"

"Certainly."

Duluth looked surprised at the bold assertion of the man, and Captain Caspar said:

"Some six months ago I was in Havana, and while there a Spanish officer arrived from Spain, with instructions to purchase an American schooner, for service on the coast of Africa.

"He found there a vessel not unlike this one in appearance, and bearing the appropriate name, for a Spanish vessel-of-war, of the Iron Don."

"He purchased the vessel from her owner, a Southern planter, and sailed with her to Spain to fit her out."

"Now this schooner is new in these waters, I having been stirring up the Peruvians and the Brazilians since I began piratical work again, and then cruising in the lower Caribbean, so that I have been so fortunate as not to run across an American man-of-war."

"So, as I have the uniforms on board, we will just fit the craft out as a Spanish cruiser, her name shall be the Iron Don, the flag of Spain shall float above her; I will be Captain Conrado, and you shall be Lieutenant Don Bianca."

"Now, could we be better fixed?"

"Captain Caspar, you are a bold man," said Duluth, who could not but admire the man's nerve.

"Yes, and a bad one," and turning to the crew, Captain Caspar ordered in his clear, ringing voice:

"All hands ahoy, to change ship into Spanish cruiser

"Lads, this craft is the Iron Don, schooner-of-war, of the Royal Spanish Navy; I am El Capitan Conrado, and this gentleman is Lieutenant Don Bianca, while you are all Spaniards, and those who cannot talk Spanish will have to be dumb."

"Senor Bueno, set the ensign of Spain above us until further orders, and put all the crew in the Spanish uniform."

And Captain Caspar turned to a young officer, who answered to the name of Goode, very appropriate for the name of Bueno, which his chief had given him.

"Senor, I have uniforms aboard to fit you, so come."

And, followed by Duluth, Captain Caspar entered the cabin.

An hour after they stood together upon the schooner's quarter-deck, and both were clad in the uniform of their rank as pretended Spanish officers, while the vessel had been metamorphosed into a cruiser of Spain, from ensign to crew.

"Senor Bueno, put the Iron Don on her course for Portland, please," said Caspar, very coolly; and turning to Duluth, he continued in the same easy way:

"Senor Bianca, yonder is one of the finest houses I have ever seen upon the American coast."

And he raised his glass to his eyes, and turned

it upon a mansion some league and a half distant.

"It is the home of Count Leon Delorme," answered Duluth in an absent way, as he stood with his eyes upon the mansion, which had been reared in its grandeur since he had, three years before, landed the count and his family there.

With his glass to his eye, watching the wonderful change that had come over what was then a wooded hill, Duluth did not see the start of the pirate at the name, and that his face flushed and paled by turns.

"What name?" he asked calmly, hiding his face with his glass.

"Count Leon Delorme."

"Ah! you know this coast, then?"

"Yes."

"And the count, too?"

"I had just brought him here from England, on the barque, when you captured me."

"I see; but he is not an Englishman?"

"He is a French exile, it is said."

"Rich, I suppose?"

"Very."

"Married?"

"His wife was dead when he came over with me, I understood."

"Children, I suppose?"

"A daughter."

"Ah! Grown up?"

"She is about nineteen now, and as beautiful as an angel; at least, she so promised to be when I knew her as a maiden of fifteen."

"Lost your heart, I guess?" and the pirate smiled slyly.

But Duluth remained silent, and still continued to gaze at the distant mansion, his heart longing to be where his eyes rested.

And so the schooner sailed on her way, and boldly entered the harbor of Portland, saluting the fort as she went in, and dropping anchor with all the assurance of a regular cruiser of Spain.

A thorough search of the harbor however, revealed the fact that the fugitive yacht had not certainly put in there, and so the schooner set sail for Portsmouth, and with equal effrontery entered that port.

Again were the searchers disappointed, for no clew could be found to the runaway crew, and the schooner headed for Gloucester, then Salem and next Boston.

With the utmost coolness, though he knew he was over a powder magazine as it were that the slightest word of one of his crew might explode at any minute, Captain Caspar received the attentions forced upon him as the supposed Captain Conrado.

Those were days when no electric wire flashed the news over the entire world within twenty-four hours, when steamers ran swiftly across the ocean, and the names of the war-vessels of all nations were upon the tongues of naval officers as to-day, so that no one doubted the pirate's representations, and, there being no Spanish vessel in port there was no dread of detection from that source.

So the schooner passed muster in Boston Harbor as a Spaniard, and then went on her cruise in search of the yacht.

Newport, New Haven, and then New York came next, and, as before in Boston, Captain Caspar took good care to enter the East River at night and discover if any Spanish vessel was in port.

Still finding no clew to the lost yacht, Captain Caspar was meditating upon visiting Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore, though he said that he felt convinced that the yacht had run into some smaller port, to the northward, and he deemed it wise that they should retrace their way, though he did not wish the ports of Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore left unvisited.

Now Duluth had an idea in his mind, and he was anxious to carry it out, so he jumped at this as a chance, and said:

"Captain Caspar, do you feel that you can trust me?"

"There is but one man in the world, Duluth, that I would trust wholly."

"And that is—"

"Myself."

"Ah! then you will not trust me?"

"In what respect?"

"You think it best to retrace our way northward?"

"Yes."

"And yet you do not wish to leave the important ports to the south of us unvisited?"

"I do not."

"Then I would suggest that you let me go ashore here in New York, take with me half a score of men, purchase some pleasure craft of thirty tons, and run to Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore and Norfolk, and search those harbors."

"Then I could come back up the coast, putting into small ports that you can leave for me, and join you at any designated place you may desire."

Captain Caspar looked fixedly into the face of the man before him, and then said:

"You have told me, Duluth, that it is necessary for you to have two million dollars within a year?"

"It is."

"If you find the yacht and treasure, what then?"

"I will look you up and give you your share."

"Faithfully?"

"I will."

"If you do not find it?"

"I will meet you at a rendezvous appointed."

"On honor?"

"Yes, only I wish ample time to make up for any delays that might be necessary."

"Certainly; let me see, say two months from to-day, meet me in Isle Haut Bay, on the Maine Coast, and if I do not put in an appearance within fifteen days after your arrival, set me down as captured and hanged."

"There is another alternative that might occur to prevent you being there?"

"Ah! what is that?"

"Your finding the treasure."

"True, and well thought of; but I'll be square with you about that."

"If you do not find it, you'll have to come back to me to make your two million, so I feel safe of you, and we are quits."

"Now, I will go ashore at once and look up my men."

"And I will pick a crew for you."

"Thank you."

"My boatswain is a good navigator, and you may have him for an acting first luff."

"Then I will give you ten good men besides, so there will be twelve of you."

"Now to the money?"

"I have what you found in the boat with me, and which those traitors *generously* gave me."

"True, and you can use it, as it is gold, and I will give you a few gems for contingencies."

So it was arranged, and while the schooner sailed that night on her course back to the northward, Duluth set sail for the south, upon the deck of a fleet little schooner which he had purchased from her builder, who had intended her for a coasting packet, but did not let the opportunity slip to get a bargain in selling her.

As he gazed astern at the Highlands of Navesink, Duluth said:

"Now to continue the search for my lost treasure; but if I do not find the yacht in the four ports to the south, I shall carry out my plan and visit Count Delorme, for after all Queen may be married by this time and I would know my destiny now."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HELD BY A SECRET.

WHETHER Queen Delorme had learned to love Henry Harvey or not, she had not allowed her father to discover it; but the day that the young officer had sailed in the little packet to join his ship at Boston, she had gone out on horseback, telling the count that she would take a long ride and bring the mail from the village, for it was mail day.

Her attendant, a groom in livery, had accompanied her, but after riding a few miles toward the village, Queen had said:

"Reuben, I will not go on to the village; but you do so and get the mail."

"Yes, miss," and Reuben went on his way muttering:

"I'm poor company for the young lady, after the pleasant rides she has had with that elegant young gentleman, Lieutenant Harvey."

"It's myself agrees with the other help, and hopes she'll marry him, instead of that proud Captain Bainbridge, who, rich as he is, and often as he visits the Castle never has given in all the fee that Lieutenant Harvey did one time, luck attend him, and it's that same young gentleman is never above a kind word and a smile for humble folks."

So Reuben rode on his way to the village, while Queen turned into a bridle-path leading into the pine forest, and darted away at a gallop.

Her way led her, after half an hour's ride, out upon the brow of a lofty point, jutting out from the sea-coast ridge.

It commanded a superb view of the coast, the islands and the sea.

After searching the expanse carefully, Queen's eyes fell upon a large sloop that was just putting out of a cove indenting the main land.

A glass was strapped to her saddle, and she hastily unbuckled it and leveled it at the little vessel.

"I see him, and he has just left home, the sloop having run into the cove, and his father has rowed him off in his skiff."

"I wonder if he will look toward this point as I told him to do?"

As she spoke she waved her handkerchief, and rode out upon the point until the horse and his fair rider stood boldly revealed against the sky.

The sloop was a coast packet, large, roomy and comfortable for passengers, and upon her broad decks half a dozen persons were visible, half of whom were the crew, the remainder being passengers from the villages along the coast on their way to Portland, Portsmouth or Boston, for the vessel touched at the two former ports, Boston and Bangor being the terminus of the voyage.

About a mile distant from the cliff, the sloop was drawn much nearer by the aid of a glass,

and Queen's face flushed, as in answer to her parting wave, she saw Henry Harvey step to the old skipper's side, and then going aft, seize the halyards and dip the flag three times.

But Queen did not know that her lover was slyly, so to speak, "killing two birds with one stone," as, not wishing to attract attention to the maiden, whom his keen eye had at once seen, when she rode out upon the cliff, he had asked the skipper's permission to dip the flag as a farewell salute to his parents.

Of course he meant it for his mother, watching him on the lawn at home, the father, rowing back in his skiff; but he also meant it for that beautiful girl, seated in her saddle, and both horse and rider looking like a piece of statuary.

For a long time did Queen watch the receding sloop, as it sped along at a lively pace on its way, and then, while her beautiful eyes dimmed with tears, and a sigh broke from her lips, she threw a kiss off over the waters, and, blushing at her act, turned her horse and dashed homeward.

Her way lay inland for miles, until she drew near Castle Cloudland, where the highway approached the coast, and ran along on top of the ridge upon which was the mansion, surrounded by its fine grounds.

As she caught sight of the sea once more, she cast her eyes away over the deep blue waters, and beheld the sloop hull down beyond the horizon.

Then she started, as her eyes fell upon a schooner at anchor in the offing.

"It is a vessel-of-war; doubtless Captain Bainbridge come to pay us a visit and show us his new vessel.

"But he would have signaled for a pilot and run into the bay.

"I guess he will not remain long, and I'll be glad, for I prefer to be alone with my thoughts to-night.

"Nanon, my naughty eavesdropping maid, said she heard Lieutenant Harvey ask my father for my hand at some future day, and the count said my fortune of two millions must be matched by the man who claims my hand.

"I only wish I had the two millions to give him, or was less of an heiress.

"Yet I do not despair, for I have confidence in Henry Harvey's accomplishing what he undertakes."

With this expression of her opinions and hopes, Queen rode on to the marine-stone entrance to the grounds about the mansion.

As the drive wound near the Overlook Arbor, she saw her father standing there, and with him an officer in uniform.

"That is not Captain Bainbridge, and it is not the American uniform; but he is a striking looking man.

"I wonder who he is?"

The curiosity of the maiden was satisfied a moment after, as she drew rein and her father said:

"Queen, my daughter, this is Captain Conrado, of the Spanish Navy, an old friend of mine, one whom I have not seen for years, and whose coming has quite startled me."

Count Delorme felt that he was white-faced and unnerved, and so made the excuse for it that he did.

Queen bent her head in salutation, and Captain Conrado, as she beheld him, made a low bow as she said:

"As an old friend of my father, Captain Conrado, you are most welcome to Castle Cloudland."

"I thank you, Senorita Delorme; permit me to aid you to dismount," and the pirate assumed an accent that was quite attractive.

Accepting his proffered assistance, Queen dismounted and walked with her father and his unwelcome guest to the mansion, she having turned her horse over to the care of a servant, who had seen her arrival.

Without a moment for explanation with the pirate, at heart furious with him, yet held in check by some strange secret which Captain Caspar knew, Count Delorme was forced to appear a cordial host, and Queen did not suspect that there was other than hearty welcome in his manner, for her father assumed a very pleasant air, after the first stiffness of his position wore off.

During his visit, which terminated about nine o'clock in the evening, Captain Caspar proved himself a most entertaining man, and he fairly charmed Queen with his brilliant conversational powers.

Then he played the Spanish guitar exquisitely, possessed a fine baritone voice, and sung love songs of other lands with a great deal of expression.

"I am sorry you cannot remain some time as our guest, Captain Conrado," said Queen, as he was leaving.

"I must return to my vessel to-night, Senorita Delorme; but, as I will be coming in these waters frequently, your father has urged me to always visit him, and you may rest assured I will be more than happy to do so."

Count Delorme winced under the falsehood of the pirate, but could only smile in response.

"As I have sent for a pilot to lead you out to sea again in his skiff, I will escort you to your

boat, Captain Conrado," said the count, and the two left the mansion together.

As they reached the Overlook Arbor the count paused and said angrily:

"Now, sir, what does all this mean, for we are alone now and you can explain?"

"Just what I told you when we met, senor; I am here to enter the lists as one of your daughter's suitors," was the cool reply.

"You are a pirate."

"True, am I worse than—no, no, I'll not draw comparisons, Count Delorme, but admit frankly that I am a pirate."

"As such, as one who loved your daughter's mother, as one who could bestow all that love upon her child, as one who has ever hated you, but will now be your friend, I ask you to give your consent for me to be the suitor of Queen Delorme."

"I will use no unfair means to win her, I will not let her dream I am other than I seem, and I will devote my life to her happiness."

"What do you say?"

"You can enter the lists, but it will be against formidable rivals, and on certain conditions."

"Admitted that I have to fight against great odds, my age, for I am double her years, and her other suitors, I would not have a prize that was too easily won; but you are not to influence her against me, for I shall look out for that, and, if I suspect it, I too might bring influence to bear against a traducer."

"Traduce a pirate!" sneered the count.

"Yes, a pirate can be worse even than he is. Satan is not, in my mind, quite so black as he is painted."

"But, be careful not to tell too much truth about me to the Senorita Delorme."

"I shall not influence her against you; but I said there was a condition."

"Ah, yes; please name it?"

"My daughter is to receive from me two million dollars, when she marries."

"A princely sum indeed; but I guess you can afford it very readily."

"I can, and more, and if I lose what I have I know where to get other riches; but the condition is that you match the Lady Queen's fortune with your own."

"What! Two million dollars?"

"Yes, that is the sum."

"But I have met with reverses, I was nearly hanged three years ago and lost all I had, I may say, and I have not more than a tenth of that sum laid by now."

"Then you cannot comply with the condition?"

"I do not say I cannot, for I may be able to do much yet, toward getting a fortune."

"When will you permit Mis: Delorme to marry?"

"In a year's time."

"Ah! then there is hope; but who made this condition?"

"It is one I am pledged to, and it must be kept."

"Have her other suitors accepted your conditions?"

"They have."

"May I ask who my rivals are?"

"One an American naval captain, a second a lieutenant in the same service, while the third is a master in the English merchant marine."

"All sailors?"

"Yes."

"Naval officers are proverbially poor, and they would have to go to successful pirate-hunting before they could get such a sum, while the merchant skipper would have to turn buccaneer to earn it."

"One is a rich man who has it now, the second will go to hunting pirates to get it, so you had better look out for your neck, and the third, I know nothing about."

"A captain, a lieutenant, a skipper and a pirate, we are."

"So be it, my dear count; put me down to complete the Rival Quartette, and expect to see me soon again. Good-night."

"I will see you, for the sake of appearances, to your boat," and the count escorted his unwelcome visitor down to the shore, where a coast pilot had preceded them to lead the boat out to sea through the dangers of the bay.

"Curse you! I will yet put the noose around your neck," hissed Count Delorme, as he turned away, and retraced his steps up to the mansion, where Queen met him with the remark:

"Now, father, tell me all about your old friend, Captain Conrado, whom, strange to say, I never heard you speak of before, and who is such a fascinating gentleman."

"He was an acquaintance of my younger days, Queen, though I am much his superior, and he was a lover of your mother's; but it is late, so let us retire," and Count Delorme was glad to escape from his daughter's questions, while she was equally as willing to seek her pillow and dream of Henry Harvey.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BLACK SKIPPER.

The reader will recall the fact that Congo, in his make-up of his Satanic Majesty, was left alone upon the yacht, after frightening the crew so terribly that they sprung into the sea.

Then he coolly took the helm, leaving the men to their fate, and steered off in search of the Convict Captain adrift in his boat.

From his hiding-place in the vacant cabin, Congo could not tell exactly which course the vessel had come, after the cruel crew had set the boat adrift; but he was a perfect sailor, and he guessed at it as nearly as he could, and so headed away in search of it.

But it had been a long time since the boat had been turned loose, and the black failed to find it, though he cruised steadily about for a long time.

If he felt any compunctions of conscience at his flight of the crew of the yacht, he did not show it, and when the wind died out near dawn he was glad to look up some food and have a rest.

The wind sprung up with the sun, but so light was it that it barely moved the yacht, and Congo sat at the tiller with his eyes fixed upon a distant point that marked land in sight.

From the conversation he had overheard among the crew, the African knew pretty nearly the locality of the yacht, and that it was the Maine Coast that loomed into view in the far distance.

"No better place could possibly be found for me," he said, as though he had determined upon his course of conduct for the future.

He knew full well that he was in possession of a vast treasure, and also of a valuable little yacht.

He was aware that the yacht had been stolen, and if she was captured by a cruiser, that his riches would all fade, and perhaps his liberty would go too.

If a pirate captured him, perhaps he would stand a better chance, for he would be accepted, doubtless, as one of the outlaw crew, and have part of his riches allowed him.

If a vessel-of-war captured him, he lost his treasure as a prize, and would have to go into slavery.

He had not proven unfaithful to the trust imposed upon him, for he had remained on the island all those long years, while his master had not returned as promised.

He had gone on board the yacht and hidden, because he saw that the treasure had been found; if it had not been, he still would have remained at the island.

Now, by his cunning plot, he had his treasure again, he was no longer on the island, he had his freedom, and was alone in a vessel he knew he could only manage in light weather, such as it then was.

"A storm would tire me out in a few hours, and I would have to let all go as it would," he said aloud, in thinking over the matter.

"I know a part of this coast as I do, my mother's face, age, and better far, for I remember her only as a child remembers, for I was stolen from her when I was a mere boy."

"If I see the part of the coast I know so well, and where I passed happy days, I will recognize it, and then I can run in readily by night and find a hiding place no one can find—yes, there is one who can, but he has gone from there."

So saying Congo held on toward the land.

It was barely in sight, and going so very slowly, he knew it would be almost night before he came near.

He was determined to keep up his weird manner of acting, and his diabolical representation, for he well knew how superstitious the people of the coast were.

It was near sunset when he approached the coast, and he had been glancing anxiously astern at a rising storm.

He muttered some words in an unknown tongue, as his eyes suddenly lighted up, and he said quickly, a few moments after:

"Allah is good to me! This is the coast I know so well."

"But changes have come, for yonder elegant house was not there then."

"Whose can it be? Who can have made an Eden out of yonder rugged hills and valleys, with their bleak rock walls facing the sea?"

"I must be cautious, and as the yacht is doubtless seen, when I stand off and on, I will not let them see me."

"The storm will break soon after dark, and then I can run in, for I know now where to go."

"The island looks as drear and desolate as ever, for no one will go there. No, no, not there," and Congo shook his head and smiled grimly, as his eyes fell upon the Haunted Island.

Taking up a rope, he ingeniously arranged it so that he could sit in the cabin and steer, and not be seen by any one from the shore, even with the strongest glass.

The "feel" of the sails would tell him how he was heading, and the deadlights in the cabin forward and upon the side would enable him to keep a lookout ahead, and upon either side.

Running in within a mile of the Haunted Island, he began to stand off and on, steering by his new contrivance, and now and then turning his glass through an open deadlight upon the shore, when he saw persons in Overlook Arbor watching the yacht and her maneuvering without a single person being seen upon her decks.

They were the count, Queen and Lieutenant Harvey, as the reader will remember.

Though watching his vessel closely, putting about at will, and keeping an eye upon the shore, Congo did not neglect the coming storm.

He saw that it threatened to be a very severe one, and knew that he must seek shelter as soon as night came on.

He could run into the island anchorage he well knew, blow as it might, or dash the sea as it would; but he intended to get in before the storm struck him, to make sure of it.

As soon, therefore, as darkness began to gather, and he knew his movements could not be seen from the shore, the Black Skipper slipped out of the cabin, reefed the mainsail and fore-staysail down close, and stripped the little schooner of all other canvas.

He made all shipshape on board, and then headed for the Haunted Island, at the point where he knew he could enter the outer reef barriers.

But he saw that he would be unable to reach the island ahead of the storm, and fearing that some coast pilot, having seen him, might be coming to his succor, he determined to frighten him off.

So he got out some blue lights to burn, and rigged himself out in his full outfit to represent the devil.

"I guess if any pilot has started, he'll put back again," he said, in his grim way, as he took his stand at the helm, arranged his demon-like wings and prepared to burn a blue light.

Soon the first breath of the storm struck him, and the schooner met it nobly, darting along before the gale in superb style.

Then came the rush of the tempest in its strength and viciousness, and seeing that the yacht would ride it out, Congo set afire his blue light and headed directly for the shore.

The yacht drove in at a furious rate, buried in the waves at times, the spray dashing to her peak, and the huge torrents of water threatening to engulf her.

But Congo saw with delight that she was as stiff as a seventy-four-gun ship, and he held on, the lightning directing him how to steer.

He had rigged with blocks and ropes a way of managing the fore-staysail from where he stood, and he had also made it easier for him to haul in the mainsheet, when it would be necessary for him to port his helm and run with the wind abeam, after he had entered the reef chains about the Haunted Island.

As he approached the Purgatory Gate, as the reef-break was called, he burned another blue light, saw his surroundings perfectly, and looking, in that mad caldron of waters, the vivid flashes of lightning, the glare of the blue light, and his diabolical costume, like Satan himself at the helm, he dashed into the opening between the rocks.

Once through the outer one he brought his bows around half a dozen points, and headed through the next opening in the second reef.

Through this he went like a flash, and, when those watching from the cliff saw him dart out of sight behind the tops of the pines that fringed the island, he suddenly hauled in his staysail and mainsheet, and porting his helm, by using his knees only, he shot along parallel with the island, the vessel lying over frightfully under the tremendous pressure of the wind.

Well he knew his danger—that loss of nerve, the snapping of a rope, the breaking of the tiller, would cause his doom.

But perfectly calm, running between the reefs and the island shore, he held on his way.

The further end of the island was high and rocky, the cliff steep as a wall, and the summits fringed with pines.

Toward this mass which looked, in the glare of the lightning, like some huge stone castle, the Black Skipper headed.

As he drew near he suddenly let his mainsail come down on the run; but under pressure alone of the staysail the yacht shot on with great speed.

As he came, so it seemed, almost upon the rocks, the staysail also came down on the run, and the next moment the schooner sped under the lee of a huge rocky pile that towered above her decks.

But on, with the impetus it had, she moved directly against the castle-like pile; but there came no shivering of the bowsprit, no shattering of the sharp bows, and crashing of timbers, as the yacht glided into a chasm between the rocks, and into waters as calm as a mill-pond.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MAD HERMIT.

WHILE the yacht, with its Black Skipper on board, steering from within the cabin companionway, was standing off and on before the Haunted Island, a strange being robed in white stood upon a rock, and gazed out over the waters.

A man of great size, broad of shoulder, powerful of limb, he stood erect, and folded his arms upon his breast, while about him was a snow-white mantle.

His hair was long, and snowy white, and his beard reached to his waist and was very gray.

Yet he seemed not to have turned gray from

age, as his complexion and bearing were youthful, and hardly could have lived two-score of years.

Upon his head he wore a white worsted cap, and altogether, with his livid face, and shroud-like mantle he might well be taken for a specter from the grave even under the light of day, were one at all given to superstition that happened to see him.

Upon his feet he wore sandals, and they were strapped over each bare foot, and the bands carried up the leg to the knee.

He wore a pair of white duck pants, a sash of red about his waist, and in it were a long knife and a pair of pistols.

His body was naked, and upon it, were a number of sketches in blue, black, red and green ink.

They were excellently well executed, and represented ships, rural scenes, a cottage, an archer, crossed swords, lettering in a strange tongue and death's heads and cross-bones.

Then there was a pretty scene drawn directly over his heart of a grave beneath a pine tree, and upon one arm were dates, running from the wrist up to within an inch of the shoulder.

The dates ran back just thirty years.

The eyes of the man were intensely black, in strange contrast to his pale face and snowy hair and beard.

They gleamed with an unnatural light, and they were fastened upon the yacht of the Black Skipper.

"It is sailed by a Heavenly Power.

"No human hand guides its destinies, and hence it comes for me.

"It will run in after nightfall, and I will go on board and see whether it takes me.

"A good angel will be the skipper, and an angel crew will do his bidding, and I will go far from here and sail over pleasant waters.

"Oh, how long have I been here?

"I keep the reckoning year after year, and I wonder that I have had to suffer so, to live all alone here on this island.

"But I dared not go among my fellow-men; I dared not have them come here, and so I have lived on, alone, wretched, homeless, forsaken.

"I recall that fearful night of storm that brought us here.

"I recall how I came in the brave ship with my beautiful bride, leaving the shores of old England to find a home in great America.

"I loved her, dared to love her though she was a noble lady, rich and beautiful, and I but a subaltern in her father's brigade.

"Ah, me! he said it was a crime for me to love his daughter, and charges were trumped up against me and I was dismissed from the service; but she believed them not and she fled with me to a little retreat, far away, and there we lived in happiness for years.

"There our little child was born, and ah! we were so happy until that fateful night when our child was stolen from us.

"It nearly broke my darling's heart, and it hurt my brain; but we could not find our little baby, and so we dared not live there and suffer.

"So we started for the New World, to seek a new home.

"Ah! I shudder as I think of that night of storm five years ago, when our good ship went down one league from here, foundering beneath the cruel waters.

"I saw many sink from sight; but I seized my loved wife in my arms, and I reached this shore.

"How, I know not; but I dragged her from the merciless waters, and staggering to this very spot I sunk down here unconscious.

"When I awoke to consciousness, my wife lay there on that spot.

"Here rested her head," and he dropped upon his knees and placed his hand upon the rock.

"But she was dead, and I, alas! lived!

"I buried her over yonder among the pines, and I expected soon to die, so I dug my grave by the side of hers.

"I dared not leave her; I dared not have people come here to rob me of her dead body, and so I have lived here these five long years.

"The wreck sent me many bodies ashore, and boxes of provisions, and I have a snug cot over there by my darling's grave.

"But I have plenty of fish and birds to eat, and I need nothing else, for I am little more than a wild beast.

"No, not a beast, for were I, never could I enter the Heavenly Kingdom.

"No—no, I am human, and because I have suffered, the yacht is sent for me that I may sail up among the clouds to find my darling.

"Ho! angel skipper ahoy!

"Come in through the two breaks in the reef, for there is good water there, and I will join you at the shore yonder."

And he pointed to where there was a sandy beach, some distance from where he stood.

As though he believed he had been heard on board the yacht, the poor maniac turned and walked back into the interior of the island.

It was a rugged place, seamed with vales, with a forbidding coast all around it, and almost entirely encircled by reefs and dangerous rocks or small rocky islets.

There were to the southward two islands, known as the Big and Little Sentinels, which the reader already knows of.

These two guarded the entrance to the island-dotted bay, on the shores of which stood Castle Cloudland.

To the nearest isle from the one which the Mad Hermit dwelt on was a quarter of a mile, it being Big Sentinel.

Then there were others here and there in the large bay; but these were not dreaded by the coasters, while the Haunted Island was an object of mortal terror.

Men of too sound sense, and too worthy of belief, had seen a white-robed specter on the island, to have the fact doubted.

Lights had been seen flashing among the trees at night, and flying along as though borne by a furious wind, even when there was a dead calm.

Strange cries had been heard, mocking laughter, cries for help, curses and prayers, and not a man dwelling on the coast was there who would go nearer the Haunted Island by day than he was absolutely compelled to do in putting out to sea and back again.

The island was a large one, containing some thirty acres, and it was thickly wooded, while at one end it rose abruptly in a pile of rocks fully sixty feet, and there were scrub pines upon the bare summit of these rocks, twisted and gnarled by the winds, that gave it the appearance of being even higher.

When he left his point of lookout, the Mad Hermit had wandered to a vale and stood gazing upon a strange scene that met his eyes, though to him it was not strange, for he saw it daily.

It was a number of graves, some thirty in a row, and at one end was a cross of wood, rudely hewn out of logs.

At the other end of the row was an open grave, and by this the Mad Hermit halted.

It was not newly dug, for it was water and weather worn into a mere pit; but down in it, half-buried in the dirt that had washed in, was the skull of a human being.

It was as though the poor creature had been sitting up in the grave, and there had died; but the dirt half-filling the grave had reached as high as the grinning teeth of the skull.

"Fools think this island is haunted.

"That poor devil has never haunted me, for he is now as he was when I came here, only the dirt is gradually covering him up.

"Nor have his comrades haunted me.

"I am the only ghost that walks here, and I am glad to frighten superstitious fools."

So saying, the Mad Hermit walked on to the cross.

Rudely cut into the arms were thirty names, with the dates of death of each, and it was a remarkable fact that all had died within two weeks' time.

The thirtieth name had no date, though it had the words:

"Die!—God knows when: but my grave is dug, and I will crawl into it to die, when I know I cannot live."

This tells the sad story of the open grave and the skeleton form seated in the bottom of it.

Then there were the lines, cut into the wood:

"Victims of a plague that broke out upon the ship Goodluck, out of London, bound for New York."

"Put ashore here by our fellow-beings to die, with only such help as the sick can give the dying."

"God's curse upon man's inhumanity to man!"

So did the rude cross tell the story of the victims of an epidemic, left by their shipmates to die.

For the thousandth time did the Mad Hermit read the inscription, and then sung in his deep voice, that seemed almost like a growl:

"Yes, I too have felt man's inhumanity to man."

Leaving the dreary spot, the warrior walked on until he reached a clump of pines upon the inner side of the island.

From among them he peeped forth, and his eyes fell upon Castle Cloudland.

"Grand, happy home! Oh! that I could have built for my darling such a home in this great New World!"

"There dwells within yon walls a beautiful being, and I have hidden from her sight, when she, braver than man, has sailed near this island, for I cared not to alarm her with sight of me, a madman and a Hermit."

"No, no; she reminds me of my lost darling, and I will never harm her, though I do feel cruel toward my fellow-man."

"Ah! that storm is coming up, and it will rain."

"I must hurry away and visit my darling's grave."

With the speed of a deer he fled through the woods until he came to a spot which was the original of the drawing over his heart.

Upon a head-board, skillfully carved, were the two words:

"MY DARLING."

Back from the grave, upon a little knoll, and completely sheltered by spruce trees and bushes, was a log hut some ten feet square.

A bunk was in it, that was all, excepting

The Convict Captain.

pieces of sails, and odds and ends of cloth used for bedding.

Smoked game and dried fish filled the walls, and there were traps of various kinds for snaring birds and rabbits, upon the floor, while outside hung rudely-made nets, fishing-lines, and a sharp spear made with a large nail and a stick.

Such was the home of the Mad Hermit.

"Ah!" he cried, as a terrific crash of thunder came, and he sprung to his feet, for he had knelt by the grave of his darling.

"The storm is breaking!"

"I must watch, that the schooner runs safely in, and that no one ashore mistakes her for an earthly craft and sends out a pilot to guide her to a haven.

"No, no; she comes here, and I sail in her for a haven beyond the skies."

So saying, he hastened to the rock that overlooked the sea, and beheld the yacht moving landward.

Then he ran to the inner shore, and a cry escaped his lips as he saw a skiff coming out toward the island.

"There comes a bold man, but I will frighten him off. Ha! ha! ha! I will frighten him off very quick!"

The darkness was now settling down fast upon all, the storm was preparing to burst in its fury, and the skiff was coming bravely on, for in it was Henry Harvey, as the reader has seen, going to the rescue of the seemingly crewless yacht, and running in to get under the lee of the Haunted Island and from there start out to face the tempest out at sea in his daring attempt to save the little vessel from going down beneath the wild waters.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TREBLY A TRAITOR.

WHEN Duluth set sail in his little schooner he had high hopes of finding some trace of those who had robbed him, as knowing that the yacht's owner often cruised in the vicinity of Portland, Boston and New York, he supposed that the men would put into some port where the craft was not known, as they knew that news of her having been run off with had without a doubt gotten known.

He did not expect much success from Philadelphia, but in Baltimore and Norfolk did anticipate finding the vessel.

So he hastily sailed on his way, visited Philadelphia, satisfied himself that she was not there, and then headed for Norfolk.

Not a clew could be gained there, and Baltimore was the next port he made.

He spent a week here, and was compelled to admit himself foiled, so set sail for the rendezvous on the Coast of Maine, determined to put in at different small ports on the way.

One night while on duty, one of the men came to him and slipped a piece of paper into his hand, with the remark:

"Read it, sir, when you go off watch."

He had observed the man often as a thorough seaman, and above his messmates in looks and education, and he felt that he had given him some information that was important.

At twelve o'clock he went to his cabin, when relieved by Cordova, the mate, and taking the paper, glanced over it

It was written in a bold hand, and was as follows:

"I write you, sir, to make known a plot against you, not daring to be seen talking with you."

"The boatswain, Cordova, is at the head of it, and it seems he is doubly treacherous, for he was set by the captain to watch you."

"If you found the treasure and made any effort to keep it, and not join Captain Caspar, Cordova was to shoot you dead and take command, running the vessel to the rendezvous, where he was to be made first luff, and get half of the captain's share of the treasure."

"Now, as you have not found it, Cordova is determined to play a game against you, and the captain too."

"It seems he was third officer of a pirate vessel, which was badly used up by a cruiser, and in a storm."

"Her crew had dwindled down by death, desertion and capture, until there were but a dozen left, so the captain ran to an island haunt on the Maine Coast, and hid the vessel away, while Cordova was sent off to get sails, spars, stores and everything to refit with, and also a crew."

"Cordova got on a spree, however, spent the money, which was all the captain had, and meeting Caspar the Corsair, shipped with him."

"He was made a boatswain, and was to be appointed a first luff by Caspar in time."

"But you were picked up at sea and the berth was given to you, though Cordova understood that you were to be gotten rid of as soon as the treasure was found."

"You were therefore put under the eye of Cordova, and he has now plotted to kill you, take this schooner, get with the money you have on board all that is needed for the pirate craft in hiding at the island, and go and take command."

"There are sixteen men there with the captain, eleven of us here, without you, and Cordova is to ship forty more when he buys the outfit for the schooner in New York."

"He will then sail for the island, kill the captain there, and proclaim himself captain, making me first mate."

"Once he has done this, he will put the schooner in perfect trim, and sail to the Isle Haut Bay to meet Caspar, going in this little schooner."

"He will tell him the treasure is found and hidden away on an island which this small schooner can only reach, and get him to accompany him with about half of his crew, as he will tell him the men there show fight for it."

"Then Captain Caspar and his men are to be trapped, the chief slain, and his schooner then captured by strategy, and Cordova, with the three vessels, will proclaim himself a pirate commodore."

"Cordova is to command Caspar's vessel, I the other large schooner, and with this craft also to be armed, we are to sail to the West Indies."

"I agreed to the plot, for it was death to me not to do so, and now I tell you, for pirate though I am, I am no traitor to my commander."

"The crew are swayed by Cordova, but deal shapely with him, and all will be in your hands."

"Cordova is not only a traitor to his old captain, but to Captain Caspar, and to you, and he will kill you surely unless you act promptly."

Such was the communication from the seaman, who was known as Elgin aboard ship.

He was an Englishman, said frankly that he had been well born, was educated and had gone to the bad, and accepted the wretched alternative.

"I will act promptly," said Duluth to himself, and placing a pair of pistols in his pockets, he went on deck.

It was bright moonlight and the schooner was bowing merrily along under a six-knot breeze.

The seaman Elgin was at the helm, and two others were on duty forward.

Without a word to Elgin, Duluth walked forward and his voice rung through the vessel as he shouted:

"All hands on deck, ahoy!"

Out from below the men came with a rush, and the two on watch gazed at Duluth with surprise.

"Cordova, move an inch and you are a dead man," and Duluth covered the mate with his pistol, while he ordered sternly:

"A rope here and string this man up!"

"He who disobeys dies!"

This was grasping the situation with a vengeance, and the crew were at once cowed by the bold stand of their commander, while Cordova, livid with dread, cried in a voice that was quivering:

"Oh, captain! what have I done?"

"I know you to be a traitor, sir, set to watch me, and kill me, by Captain Caspar, and I will show this crew who is commander here."

"But, sir!"

"Silence! put that noose over this man's neck, and one of you get up into the rigging with a block and make it fast."

"I'll not do it," cried the man addressed in a sullen manner, and who was the particular friend of Cordova.

"Then die, sir!" and quick as a flash Duluth drew his right hand from his pocket and sent a bullet through the mutineer's brain.

"Now, sir, you obey my order!"

The man he turned to sprung with alacrity to obey, and five minutes after he shouted down:

"All ready, sir!"

"Spare me, and I'll be your slave!" shrieked the Spaniard, in terror, as he felt his arms pinioned behind him.

"I know no mercy, sir, with traitors and mutineers," was the stern response, and then followed the order:

"Up with him!"

Into the air, shrieking, struggling, the wretch was dragged, and the mutiny was at an end, for the crew were now thoroughly cowed by the stern, silent man whom they had felt that they could do with as pleased them.

"Mr. Elgin, you are officer in place of that wretch," said Duluth walking aft, and he called a man to take the wheel, while he motioned to Elgin to follow him into the cabin.

"Did I act promptly enough?" he asked calmly.

"Indeed you did, sir, and if there had been a hundred men on board your decided and merciless manner would have mastered them."

"Now you know, I suppose, just what that schooner in hiding needs to fit her out?"

"Cordova had the list, sir."

"And you know where she is?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I shall run into Boston Harbor, secure about fifty good men, and purchase what is needed, after which we will go to the hiding-place of the schooner."

"I will then put my men and outfit against the captain, his vessel and the crew he has, and offer to gamble with him for the captaincy."

"If he wins, I to be first officer and you second, he of course chief."

"If I win, I am to be chief, he first luff and you second."

"Then, as Captain Caspar has been treacherous to me, I hold no faith with him, and I will meet him at the rendezvous as agreed; but it will be with the armed schooner, and one of us must command both, for he shall be punished if I have the strength to do it."

"If I capture him, you are to command his vessel, and we are to go on a special cruise, which I will make known to you hereafter."

"If he defeats me, you can make what terms with him you can."

"Now, Mr. Elgin, please put the schooner

on her course for Boston direct," and without asking Elgin for an opinion or an acceptance of his plans, the Convict Captain calmly retired for the night, as though he had not just been the actor in a deadly tragedy.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN UNEXPECTED LEGACY.

WHEN Henry Harvey left his house, to report in Boston for duty, he watched the form upon the ridge, until he no longer could see, even with his glass, the wave of her handkerchief.

Then he stood gazing out over the waters, with a sad look upon his handsome face.

"I have to get two million dollars before I can claim her hand," he muttered.

"Why the more I think of it, the further she seems off from me, for how can I ever get that sum?"

"It is a king's wealth, and it was the count's way of telling me, I guess, that he had other plans for his daughter."

"Well, she loves me, I am sure of that, if I can read her heart through her eyes, and yet I fear our love is hopeless."

"Why even pirates have not such vast wealth as that, and I would have to capture a dozen buccaneers to get such a sum in prizes."

"I wonder what duty I am to be ordered on?"

"Perhaps to foreign seas, where my pay as a lieutenant will be all I can get."

"Well, I do not despair; I hope, and will struggle for the prize."

Having made up his mind to this, Henry Harvey, not to be idle, asked the captain to please assign him to duty as a mate, and the old skipper said quickly:

"My dear young gentleman, just step into my shoes for the trip, for I would like to overhaul my books, which I have gotten behind in the past few voyages," and so Henry Harvey took command of the sloop, and quickly woke the lazy crew up to action.

But they knew him well, and had from boyhood, and they were glad to serve under his orders.

Upon arriving in port, and the sloop had never made as quick a run of it, Henry Harvey went to the inn, and the first one he met there whom he knew was Preble Bainbridge.

"Ho, Harvey, I am glad to see you, and I can tell you what your orders are," he cried.

"Foreign service, captain, I suppose?"

"Not a bit of it, and you owe it to me that you are not sent to the Mediterranean."

"The fact is, I have been made port captain here, and there will be three or four cruisers to report to me, and I take command of the brig-of-war Scorpion, and shall mostly remain about the harbor cruising-ground as a protection to shipping interests here, while you are to take command of the new schooner-of-war Blue Blazes, and go after pirates that cruise from Montauk Point to Halifax Harbor."

"I could not have asked for a duty I would like better, Captain Bainbridge."

"So I thought, and you have a chance before you to make a name for yourself, and I asked for you for the service, when the commodore was looking about for a man for the work."

"The fact is, they thought of putting me on that duty; but then I like my ease, and asked for harbor service, and suggested to them your name, reminding them that you had been most lucky in the past in capturing pirates, and telling them that you knew the coasts north as no pilot did."

"So they gave you the orders to go pirate-hunting, and I will accompany you to headquarters, as afterward I wish to talk to you about another matter."

Taking the lieutenant's arm in a friendly way, Preble Bainbridge led him to the quarters of the commodore commanding the squadron of vessels upon the upper coast of the United States, above Montauk Point, and the young officer made a good impression on his superior.

The schooner-of-war, Blue Blazes, a beautiful little vessel of two hundred tons, with a crew of seventy men and an armament of eight guns, was then visited by Bainbridge and Harvey, and the latter assumed command, after which the two young officers returned to the tavern, and the lieutenant invited the captain to his room, for several times he had hinted of an important matter to be talked over.

"Now, Harvey, I have another surprise for you, and I congratulate you upon it, while you must think me sincere in my good wishes, as I am so well provided for myself I can afford to be generous."

"Now let me ask you if you are aware that there is a relationship between us?"

"Oh, yes; I know that, somewhere, far back in the past, we had the same ancestor," was the indifferent reply.

"Have you ever heard of a great-uncle of your mother, by the name of Cummings?"

"Uncle Jesse Cummings? Yes, indeed, I have, and he was my hero as a boy."

"He was my grandmother's young brother, and he ran off and went to sea when he was a mere lad, and for a long time he was believed dead."

"Then he appeared as an officer in the Rus-

sian Navy, and he had won his way up from cabin-boy.

"Years after he reappeared as admiral of the Russian Navy, and his fleet put into Boston Harbor when I was a little boy, and I went on board with my parents to see him."

"But what of him?"

"Well, he is the same blood relationship to me that he is to you, and he has accumulated a vast fortune in Russia."

"But he has resigned his high rank there, and come here to die."

"He has bought a handsome house on the edge of town—to die in, he says—has furnished it grandly, and is to live there, surrounded by his Russian servants."

"My father called upon him at once, with me, and the old fellow very coolly told me that he had had two heirs in his mind to whom to leave his property, which is worth, he said, something over two million dollars."

"Two million dollars!" gasped Henry Harvey.

"Yes, and it is almost as much as my father is worth, you know."

"But the old admiral spoke of you and me as his intended heirs."

"Not me?"

"Surely, for you are the same to him in blood-kindred that I am; but it seems the old fox has had an idea of his own about his heirs, and has very quietly investigated us."

"The result is that he finds I have risen in the navy by influence of my name only, as he says, and also that I am inclined to be fast."

"He told me flatly that I gambled heavily, lived like a prince, was a Don Juan in society, and consequently not fit to be his heir."

"On the contrary he said you had risen, as he had, from before the mast, and by your own exertions alone, and that you were not a gambler, nor a drunkard, while you respected all ladies as you would a sister."

"Mark the difference, and so the old admiral very coolly told me you should be his sole heir, that I had plenty as it was, and to bring you up when you came."

"So we will go up and dine with the old sea-dog, and you can learn from his own lips of your good fortune."

Henry Harvey was speechless from amazement.

What to say, what to do, he knew not.

His first thought was that he had greatly wronged Preble Bainbridge, and that he had wholly misunderstood his character, so he said:

"Preble, I have never looked upon you as friendly to me; but the pleasant way you tell me of my good fortune, and take your disappointment proves that I have misjudged you, so I beg your pardon, and let us be friends, while, believe me, all I can say or do, with Uncle Jesse, will be devoted to his dividing his legacy equally between us."

"Not a bit of it, Henry, for my father will leave me as much as you will get."

"The old admiral has made his will, and in case of your death, I believe, he leaves it to me; but this is done as a soft sop for me, as you will live to a ripe old age and enjoy your legacy."

"Now let us go up and see the gruff old sailor; but you will like him, and he says my indifference to being cut off, makes him admire me too."

Half an hour after the two young officers were ushered into the old admiral's elegant home, and Henry Harvey heard his bluff welcome:

"I am glad to see you, my boy, and to know that you are not the scamp who Preble here is, and while you gain by your manly life, he loses his share by his disreputable one."

"But he's a good fellow withal, and if he'll take you for an example, may become a good man—in time. "I am worth two million and over, my boy, and it's all yours, when I die, which may be at any time, as I have heart disease."

"Now this is your home, and so consider it," and the admiral grasped the hand of Henry Harvey who was too deeply moved to speak, for now he felt that he could match the fortune of Queen Delorme.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BLUE BLAZES ON A CRUISE.

WHEN Henry Harvey went on board of his fine schooner, to make his first cruise under his new orders, he had a happy heart.

He had had a long and pleasant chat with the admiral after dinner, for Preble Bainbridge had left early, pleading an engagement, and he had told his newly-found kinsman all of his ambition and hopes, at the same time urging him to make a cruise with him, as his guest on board the Blue Blazes, and promising to leave him at home with his parents for a few weeks, while he took a run down as far as Halifax and back.

The admiral accepted the invitation, for he was anxious to see Henry's parents, his mother having always been his favorite among his kindred.

The admiral also wished to satisfy himself as to just what kind of an officer Henry was.

So he went on board with his Russian valet, and was given the cabin to himself.

It was well fitted up and very comfortable, with two state-rooms and all to make life at sea enjoyable.

But the admiral would not turn Henry out of his quarters, and insisted that he should share the cabin with him, and then he went on deck to see how his great nephew got a vessel under way.

He heard his orders, saw that the crew realized that their new commander knew his business thoroughly, and noted how the young officer took in every rope, sail, and the behavior of each man.

"You've got a splendid vessel, Lieutenant Harvey, an excellent crew, and I may say she is handled in a masterly style," said the delighted old admiral.

Henry Harvey was pleased with the compliment, and he found his uncle after that often on deck watching him closely, and he was glad to have him do so, for the young officer felt a conscious pride in his seamanship.

One night a fearful storm swept suddenly up, and the admiral at once went on deck.

"Couldn't have got her undressed and in such good shape in less time myself," he muttered, as he saw that Henry had the schooner stripped to meet the tempest.

All during the storm the aged seaman remained on deck, and as he retired to the cabin, leaning on his nephew's arm, he said in his blunt way:

"Lieutenant Harvey, you are a better seaman than I was at your age, and I rose to be an admiral by my own exertions, and you'll yet reach the rank through merit, and long before death and regular promotion will put you there."

"Why, sir, you handled your schooner superbly, with no fuss, no confusion, and your men know you are master."

The next day the Blue Blazes put into the little haven near Harvey Farm, and Henry was delighted to introduce the old admiral to his parents, who met them upon the shore.

Leaving the admiral to enjoy a visit at the farm, Henry Harvey sailed on his cruise, but his mother, watching him from the point near, saw him head into Cloudland Castle Haven.

Seated in the Overlook Arbor, Queen Delorme saw the schooner coming in, and she wondered who it could be running the channel so boldly without a pilot, and with the sea quite high.

But soon, with her glass, she recognized the manly form upon the quarter-deck and her face flushed with joy.

As a boat put ashore, Queen arose and met the young officer upon the stair landing, and the warm welcome she gave him caused his heart to throb with delight.

"I am on my first cruise in my new schooner, Miss Delorme, and took the liberty of running in for a few hours," he said.

"Why will you make so short a stay?" she asked.

"There is duty ahead of me, for of late our coast has become infested with pirates, and a great deal of damage has been done to shipping, so I am ordered on the special service of hunting down sea outlaws, wherever I can find them, from Halifax to Montauk Point."

"Ah! then you will be quite often in our vicinity."

"I hope so."

"Your duty is a most dangerous one."

"No, for the sly sea rover wants gold, not lead, and he generally runs from the sea dog, where he chases the ocean hare."

"Still it is dangerous, although you make light of it."

"A sailor's life is always dangerous, Miss Delorme; but I saw Captain Bainbridge before I left, and, expecting that I might see you, he desired me to present his kind remembrances."

"Thank you," said Queen, coldly, and without again referring to Preble Bainbridge, she continued.

"We had a visit not long since from a Spanish officer, Captain Conrado, a very entertaining gentleman indeed, and an old friend of my father."

"Indeed! I had not heard of a Spanish cruiser being on the coast."

"His vessel is the Iron Don, a schooner-of-war."

"Ah! a vessel lately purchased by Spain then, for she had not a schooner-of-war in American waters three months ago; but I should like to meet him, as a friend of your father's, and show him some courtesy in port."

"He is now in these waters, for he has called on us twice, and said he expected to remain near for a while."

"I think he has his eye also upon the pirates."

"I cannot but hope I shall be the first to get my guns upon them; but let me thank you for your kind farewell to me from the point of Rocky Ridge."

"You saw me then?" innocently said Queen.

"Did you not see my salute with the colors?"

"Oh, yes; was that for me?" she asked, in the same innocent tone.

"Who else could I mean it for, Miss Delorme?"

"I saw your father in his skiff, and your mother on the lawn."

"Ah, yes; but I could kiss my hand in farewell to them, you know."

Queen blushed, for she remembered she had kissed her hand in farewell to him.

But feeling that he was treading on dangerous ground, after his promise to the count, Henry Harvey said:

"But let me ask about your father."

"There he comes now, and pardon me that I have not before asked you up to the house."

The count now entered and warmly greeted the young sailor, who at once extended an invitation for the father and daughter to dine on board ship, after which he would have to put to sea.

The invitation was accepted, Queen saying:

"And we can take my new yacht in tow and run outside with you, and I can sail father back, for I wish you to see the little craft I have had built in the place of the one the pirates burned that day."

Thus it was settled, and they were about to start down to the shore, when a schooner suddenly came into view, luffed sharp, fired a gun, and lay to half a league from the Haunted Island.

"Why, I should take that for a challenge to run out and fight him, if we were at war with any country," said Henry Harvey, turning his glass upon the vessel.

"It is the Iron Don, a Spanish cruiser, whose commander is an old friend of mine," said the count quietly.

"Ah! it is he of whom you spoke, Miss Delorme?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then he is just in time to join us at dinner, for a boat is putting off from the side of the schooner, I see."

"Yes, he has no pilot for these waters, so anchors in the offing, and comes in in his boat," Queen remarked, adding: "I know you will like Captain Conrado, Lieutenant Harvey, for he is a most delightful conversationalist."

"Any friend of yours, Miss Delorme, I cannot but like," was the gallant reply, while the count remarked:

"Even to Bainbridge, eh, Harvey?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I like Bainbridge, but always thought he did not like me."

"In some things I misunderstood him, as I now know, for he was most friendly to me in Boston, and secured me my present service on the coast, when otherwise I would have been sent to foreign waters."

"And more, Count Delorme. Captain Bainbridge met me on my arrival in Boston and gave me information that an old great-uncle of mine, who ran off to sea when a lad, and became an admiral in the Russian Navy, had come back to America to pass his last days, and had made me his sole heir to a property worth something over two millions."

"The admiral came up with me as far as my home, where he will visit until my return, and I should like you to meet him," and Henry Harvey gave the count a look which plainly said:

"I've got the two millions now to match your daughter's fortune."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DUEL FOR MASTERY.

UPON one of the most rugged islands of the Maine Coast a man stood gazing out upon the sea.

A man with a determined, reckless face, bronzed by long exposure to wind and wave, and with a short, thick-set form, clad in a sailor suit.

"Curses upon him! he is not yet in sight."

"I wonder if he has proven traitor, for he is none too good for it."

"Perhaps he spent my gold, and fears to return."

"If so, I am doomed, for my vessel lies yonder, utterly worthless as she is, I have no shot for my guns, and just sixteen men in my crew, so I am surely ashore."

"I gave him six weeks to get back, and he has been gone nearly as many months."

"If he does not soon come, I will go in my small boat to the nearest port and see if there is any vessel there that I can seize, and with her get what I need for my schooner."

"I will go within the week, for any day a cruiser may happen in here upon me, and then I am caught like a fox in a hole."

He turned to go, but after a few steps stopped and again let his vision sweep the horizon.

"Sail, ho!" he called out, with seamanlike promptness, as though on board of his vessel.

"She is close hauled and heading for this island."

"Yonder point of land concealed her from me before."

"A small schooner, unarmed as I make her out, but with a good many men on board—ah! it is Cordova returning, after all."

"Bravo! now I will again fly over the waters and replenish my lockers from the rich traders of the sea."

He kept his glass upon the little vessel for a long time, though he remained hidden by a rock from the view of any curious eye upon the deck.

Then he said:

"She is certainly unarmed, and can be no other than Cordova's vessel."

"There must be half a hundred men on board, and she is heading so as to run into the channel between the islands."

"I must go down and be prepared to meet them, whoever they may be."

As he spoke he closed his glass, and started to descend from his point of lookout.

The island he was upon was a peculiar one in shape.

It was shaped like a human hand, and between rocky points serving as fingers, jutting out from what stood for the palm, there was a channelway or inlet.

The center one was deep, and a vessel in mild weather could enter it and run directly into what was the *hand* of the island, where upon all sides towered rocky hills, the summits hidden by pines.

In the basin thus formed was a vessel at anchor, and her topmasts had been lowered, or lost in a gale, for they were missing.

As she lay her masts did not rise above the tree-tops, so that a vessel passing near would not have suspected that a craft lay in hiding there.

The vessel was a schooner, heavily armed, with high bulwarks and the look of having seen hard service.

She was fearfully weather-worn, her canvas was black and torn, her bowsprit was gone, and her spars were badly scarred by shot-marks.

Upon her decks were a score and a half of hard-looking specimens of manhood, and altogether the captain, his vessel and his crew were most unprepossessing, be they pirates or honest traders.

Upon reaching the shore, the one who had discerned the strange vessel shouted out:

"Up, you lazy dogs, and look to your weapons, for a vessel is moving in on us!"

The words acted like magic, for the crew sprung about lively, while their captain got into a boat that lay ashore and sculled himself out to the vessel.

As she lay, the schooner was anchored fore and aft, so that her broadside was toward the entrance to the basin, and the craft entering must face her fire.

"We've got but half a dozen shot all told; but we'll give 'em that, if they are enemies; but I think it's that rascal Cordova, come at last," said the pirate captain, and his men broke out into a cheer.

But he quickly silenced them, and, standing at the guns, they waited for the stranger to enter the basin.

They had not very long to wait, for soon the little schooner shot into sight, and she carried at her foretop a large white flag.

"It's Cordova! bravo!" and her captain's words brought a cheer from the men.

In ten minutes more the little vessel, having given peaceful signals, ran alongside, and Duluth sprung on the pirate deck, accompanied by Elgin, and followed by three-score seamen.

"Ho! what means this? Where is Cordova?" yelled the pirate.

"Cordova is at the bottom of the sea, sir, for I had him hanged, and came myself with men and all that you need to fit out your schooner," said Duluth.

"Who are you?"

"An adventurer, an escaped convict, and at present a pirate."

"And what of Cordova?"

"He left you to betray you, squandered your money, shipped on a pirate craft, sought to betray me, then you, and last Captain Caspar, with whom he had allied himself, and intended to become a pirate commodore."

"I found out his plot, had him hanged, bought for your vessel stores, ammunition of all kinds, canvas for sails, paints, spars—in fact all that you need, and more, and I have come to bring them and fit your vessel out."

"You are a bold fellow, and have a seaman-like look, so I will offer you the berth of my first officer."

"My dear captain, I cannot accept it."

"Why not?"

"I wish to be captain."

"Of a used up, crewless craft."

"You have a few men and stores, but no vessel to cruise in."

"My idea is to see whether you take what I have, or I get your vessel."

"How do you mean?"

"Why you wish to be commander?"

"Certainly I do."

"I wish also to be captain."

"You cannot be."

"You would not be willing to go as my first luff?"

"Never, sir!"

"Why not?"

"I, a captain, go backward?"

"You have made a poor success, to judge from what I see about me."

"I still am captain."

"Won't be first luff?"

"No, sir."

"I will not be either."

"Well, what is to be done?"

"I have what you need."

"Yes."

"You have what I need."

"Yes."

"We cannot have two captains."

"No, indeed."

"Then we must decide who is to be the one."

"I have already decided."

"You have not yet won your position, sir, and so I say to you that we will gamble for it."

"Gamble for it?"

"Yes."

"With cards?"

"Certainly."

"Risk my rank upon a game?"

"Your rank, or your life?"

"I will not."

"You must!"

"Ah! you have the power to dictate terms."

"I know that I have."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, man."

"Well, sir?"

"I'll fight you for it."

"Nothing could give me more pleasure than to oblige you."

"With weapons?"

"Certainly."

"What weapons?"

"Suit yourself, captain."

"Swords!" shouted the pirate.

"As you please; swords or pistols are all the same to me."

"Clear me space here, men, and let me clip this fellow's claws," yelled the pirate, and he drew his cutlass.

Duluth did the same, and instantly advanced upon him.

As their blades crossed Duluth shouted:

"Hold!"

"Do you withdraw?"

"Not I, sir; but I wish to say that if I fall you are chief of all, if you fall I assume command."

"Do you so understand, lads?"

A loud affirmative was given, the pirate crew joining in, for they liked the dashing style of the handsome young stranger.

Then the blades clashed again, and the combat was begun.

The pirate was a good swordsman, for what he lacked in consummate skill he made up in strength and endurance; but Duluth was a master of a blade, and he drove his enemy back step by step, and soon ended the combat by disarming him.

"Will you go as second officer now, sir?"

"Never!" and seizing his weapon again the pirate attacked him furiously, to fall dead, struck down by Duluth's blade.

"Men, I command here! so get to work and fit this craft at once for sea," was Duluth's stern order, and it was obeyed.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DEMON OF THE ISLE.

WHEN Henry Harvey arrived on board of the Blue Blazes, accompanied by Count Delorme and Queen, it was observable that the vessel in the offing could not be seen from the cruiser's decks, some wooded islets lying between.

The boat, however, pulling in-shore, soon came in sight, and that those on board had not before seen the schooner was evident from the fact that they had suddenly ceased rowing.

But after a moment they resumed rowing again and headed shoreward.

Placing a middy in the stern of the boat, in which he had just come from the shore, Henry Harvey bade him go and ask Captain Conrado to come aboard and dine with him, telling him to say also that Count Delorme and the Lady Queen were also the guests of the captain of the Blue Blazes.

They saw the middy hail the boat, run alongside, and soon the two came toward the schooner.

Captain Conrado, as the pirate pretended to be, seemed a trifle nervous, as he stepped on board the deck of the schooner; but he was well-covered by Count Delorme and Queen, and the latter presented him to Lieutenant Harvey.

The young sailor fairly started as he saw the outlaw leader, while, feeling that he had really shown emotion, he said quickly:

"Pardon me, Captain Conrado, if I tell you that your striking resemblance to a once famous pirate chief, almost unmanned me."

"You mean Caspar the Corsair, who was hanged nine years ago, Senor Harvey?" said the pirate, with the utmost coolness.

"Yes, sir; I captured him, and he was quickly sentenced and hanged, though I have heard a rumor that he escaped and the prison-keeper kept it secret; in fact it is said that he has since been seen several times; but I hope you will pardon me for my seeming surprise, and the remark that you so closely resemble such a villain?"

"Certainly, Senor Captain Harvey, for I have been told of the resemblance often before, and, but that the pirate were dead, I would have to have care that I was not captured and hanged by some of your American cruisers," and the disguised pirate smiled blandly, while Count Delorme hastened to change the subject.

It was a delightful dinner they had on board the Blue Blazes, Henry Harvey with the courtesy he always showed, inviting the officers of his vessel to dine with his guests.

And the pretended Spanish captain made himself most agreeable to all, and fairly won the hearts of Henry Harvey and his officers.

At length it became time for the Blue Blazes to put to sea, and Count Delorme, as Captain Conrado had hinted it, said he would ask Lieutenant Harvey to signal for a pilot, and they would then run out upon the American cruiser and return on the Spanish vessel.

This seemed to please Queen also, and after a signal gun, one of the coast pilots from the Delorme estate quickly came off and the Blue Blazes put out to sea, Henry Harvey himself at the helm.

"You know these waters well, Captain Harvey," said the pretended Spaniard, as he watched the skillful manner in which Henry Harvey handled his vessel.

"I do, Senor Captain, for my home is not far from here.

"See, we are nearing the Haunted Island; but we turn in a few minutes and leave it on our port quarter."

"By the way, Harvey, we have seen other manifestations from the island since your departure," said the count.

"Indeed! what were they, sir?"

"A black ghost, spook, devil, or whatever he may be called has been seen on the island."

"That is surprising, sir, for I believed that there was no color line after death, and that an Indian and negro became like other spirits."

"So I believed, but my men report a large black being having been seen upon the island."

"He is manlike in form, but possesses huge wings, horns on either side of his head and dresses in scarlet shirt and short breeches, while he carries a spear in the shape of a cross."

"It must be Satan himself," said Captain Conrado, crossing himself as though he were a devout Catholic.

"Well, I have never seen the creature, or whatever it is, nor do I wish to; but a score of my people, some of whom I cannot doubt, have seen him, and, as I know that a spirit being did dwell there, I cannot doubt them."

All gazed upon the island with increased interest, and then it was dropped astern, and the Blue Blazes ran down near the Iron Don and farewells were said as the count, Queen and Captain Conrado were transferred from one vessel to the other by a boat.

"You will touch as you come back, Harvey, for there is something I wish to talk with you about," said the count in a low tone, and the young officer's heart beat more rapidly, as he thought that it was to be about Queen, now that he had become the old admiral's heir.

"It was just dark as the two vessels parted, and while the Blue Blazes held on her way northward, the Iron Don started back into the bay.

As they neared the Haunted Island, at the point where the conversation regarding it had occurred, the pilot, who was at the helm of the schooner, fairly shouted:

"Oh, see there!"

All eyes were turned upon the island, and there suddenly flashed up a weird, bluish light, on the top of a rock, and in the midst of it stood a huge black form, the body and legs to the knee enveloped in scarlet.

He had a huge pair of black wings, spread as though about to fly, horns upon his human-like head, and held in his hands a cross, the long and pointed end to serve as a spear.

The light about him, coming from some unknown source seemed to attend him, and a more startling sight could not have been imagined.

Cries of alarm went up on all sides, the crew prayed lustily forward, many of them dropping upon their knees, while it was certain that Conrado, the count and Queen were deeply impressed by the alarming spectacle.

Suddenly the light went out, and his Satanic-like Majesty disappeared.

A groan of relief went up from the crew, and when the anchor was let go near inshore, all seemed deeply impressed.

Captain Conrado went to the mansion with the count and his daughter, but after breakfast the next morning he set sail, promising to return in a few days and investigate the Haunted Island.

Hardly had his vessel disappeared from view up the coast, when another sail appeared in sight.

It was a schooner-of-war, as both the count and Queen saw, as it drew nearer, and, instead of passing on up the coast, it put its helm astern and ran directly into the bay, and in a manner that caused the maiden to exclaim:

"Father, that vessel has a coast pilot on board!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BLACK DEMON.

WHEN Congo ran into a quiet pool, in the midst of the pile of castle-like rocks for which he had headed, he knew exactly the spot for which he was heading.

The mass of rocks had, through some convul-

sion of nature in the past, split in twain, from top to foundation.

The chasm thus left was some thirty feet wide, the water was very deep, and the rocks rose on either side to the hight of the schooner's cross-trees, so that with the topmasts housed there was no danger of the craft being discovered there.

The chasm was about two hundred feet long and ended, at the further end, in a mass of piled-up rocks.

In this chasm-like anchorage Congo had sought the schooner without any mishap, and hastening forward he dropped anchor to check her impetus.

Then he took up a smaller anchor and let it down over the stern, so that the vessel would ride at perfect ease.

His next move was to go aloft and house the topmasts, and by the time he had all snug it was nearly dawn.

But Congo was not one to calmly trust to luck, not to be disturbed, and so he determined to go ashore and see if the island was inhabited.

The storm had passed away, the moon shone brightly, and getting into the small boat belonging to the schooner, and which had hung at the stern davits, he lowered it into the water and slowly sculled out of the chasm.

He was armed with knife and pistol, and landed at a sandy beach not far away from the entrance to the chasm basin.

He seemed to know the island as well as he had the waters surrounding it, and passed on into the interior.

Suddenly he halted, for an object caught his eye.

It was a tall white form, and it barred his path.

Congo was utterly fearless. He dealt in the supernatural art, so he was not easily alarmed by trickery.

But this that stood before him was certainly a spirit, it seemed.

The moonlight fell full upon it, and thus was no hallucination.

So Congo moved a few steps nearer, and the white arms waved him back.

He had been in the shadow; but now he advanced into the moonlight.

To frighten off whoever might harm him, should he meet any one on the island, Congo had taken the precaution to rig out in his costume *a la diable*.

He seized the strings that worked his wings, as he stepped forward, and with his horned head, black form and huge wings, he was a horrible sight indeed.

It seemed a case of ghost against devil, with the chances certainly in favor of the latter, if appearances went for anything.

The white-robed form now saw the black, demon-like form in all its hideousness, and a wild shriek broke from the lips of the former.

It was a cry of alarm, of hate, of fury commingled.

But Congo stood his ground.

Not so the white-robed form, however, for, with a second yell, he sprung toward the African, and instantly the two became engaged in a desperate struggle.

Over and over on the ground they rolled, then rising to their feet they struggled on.

Neither spoke, and only the noise of the combat and their hard breathing could be heard.

It was a battle of giants, and for a long time it lasted.

But at length the two rose together, clasped in each other's arms, and they then fell heavily.

The white-robed form was beneath, and neither arose.

For a long time they lay motionless, and then Congo moved.

He raised his head and glanced about him.

Then he looked down into the face beneath his own.

A long time he gazed, then passed his black hand over the beard, then pushed the snowy hair back from the forehead, and muttering some words in his native tongue he arose to his feet.

He swayed to and fro as though weak, but leaned against a tree until he had regained his strength.

Then he glanced again at the prostrate form at his feet, and strode off into the interior of the island.

Coming upon the lowly cot of the Mad Hermit, he looked about him.

He saw the grave of the madman's wife, and then strode on his way through the island.

He visited the graves of those who had been left there to die of the plague.

Then he made his way back toward the coast.

He stopped at the form of the man he had fought with, and which still lay motionless where it had fallen.

He bent over it, gave a cry, and raising it in his strong arms, hastened with it to the cot.

He laid it upon the rude bed, and then hastily left the hut and wended his way back to the shore, sprung into his boat, and pulled for the yacht in the basin.

As he sprung on board, dawn was breaking, the light of the moon was paled under the coming sunrise, and the African quickly entered the

cabin, for he looked worn and haggard in the increasing light, his hands, arms and face were blood-stained, his diabolical costume sadly disarranged, and his wings limp and broken.

From that day was it, that rumors began to fly along the coast that the ghost of the island had suddenly changed into a black demon.

Some fishermen, passing into the bay about twilight, beheld the tall, black form, with its great sable wings standing upon a rock gazing calmly upon them.

With a force they had never used before, in haste or in storm, they sent their boat, heavy with nets and a good haul, along over the waters.

They were frightened 'most out of their wits, and they made the large boat fly along.

Landing, they hastened to their cots in the ravines, and that night the rumor sped from cabin to cabin of the Black Demon of the Isle, and one and all seemed to dread the diabolical-looking being far more than they had the white-robed specter that had before been seen upon the Haunted Island.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR VISITOR.

THE schooner discovered by Count Delorme and Queen from Overlook Arbor, was certainly not the Iron Don, for that vessel had just passed from sight down the coast.

It was not the Blue Blazes, for the stranger was not so trim a craft by any means as was the vessel of Henry Harvey.

It must therefore be some American cruiser.

But no, such was not the case, as Queen discovered the fact that the American flag was floating at the fore, while strange colors to her were at the peak.

Instantly the count seized his glass and bent it upon the ensign of the stranger.

"That is not an American, Queen; no, she carries, as you say, the Stars and Stripes at the fore, and I cannot make out her own colors—ah! I see them now, as she changes her course—it is a Cartagenian cruiser.

"A Cartagenian, father?"

"Yes, one of the States that is fighting for independence from Spain, and has sent many able privateers out over the seas."

"But why does she come here?"

"I cannot tell you."

"She runs the channel perfectly."

"Yes, the man at her helm knows these waters well."

"And yet she is a fugitive."

"True, but many Americans, it is said, are in the Cartagenian service."

"And one from this neighborhood may have gone there and now be returning home."

"Yes."

"It is fortunate that the Iron Don is away, or there would be a battle, as they would be foes."

"Yes, and they are well matched, in size and guns, and it seems in crews, as well as I can judge."

"I only wish the Iron Don was here."

"Why, father! would you wish to see a battle between them?"

"Indeed I would, my child."

"I would glory in it," and the young girl did not understand the look that flashed over her father's face.

"Well, father, I see they have dropped anchor and are sending a boat ashore, so I will go to the mansion, as I do not care to meet strangers," and Queen turned away, while her father said to himself:

"I would give much to have that accursed Caspar return now under his Spanish flag, and have that Cartagenian fight him and kill the wretch."

"Ah! how glibly he plays the part of Captain Conrado of the Spanish Navy!"

"But I dared not say a word against him; but I told Harvey I had something to tell him, and I will give him a point that will make him tear that Iron Don to pieces and swing her pirate captain up to the yard-arm."

"But yonder Cartagenian captain is certainly coming here," and Count Delorme watched a boat land, saw a tall form spring ashore, ascend the cliff steps, and, in a gorgeous uniform, suddenly appear before him.

"Captain Duluth!"

The words were forced by surprise from the lips of the count.

"Count Leon Delorme, I am glad to see that your old sailing-master, Leon Duluth, is not forgotten," said Duluth, with a pleasant smile, extending his hand.

The count grasped it mechanically, while he replied:

"I have not forgotten you, Captain Duluth, but I did not expect to find you in uniform and under the Cartagenian flag, while, in fact, I thought you were dead."

"Why should I die, Count Delorme, with the prospects ahead of me that I have?" asked the sailor in his quiet way.

"You have good prospects then?"

"Ah yes! though I have suffered much since last we met."

"I believed you had been lost at sea, for I wrote to the shipping-merchants in England,

from whom I chartered the barque to come to America in, and they could give me no information regarding you."

"It is not strange, either, for they did not know me."

"What they gave me, the barque and the right to bring you here, I paid for, and most liberally."

"I would have returned them the barque, only, after our agreement—"

"Our agreement?" asked the count in surprise.

"Yes, such were my words."

"I do not understand."

"Have you forgotten all?"

"All what, sir?"

"That I was to become the suitor for your daughter's hand when I could match her fortune with my own?"

"I remember I said so."

"Then such was the agreement."

"Well, sir, I listen."

"It was to bring you here that I brought the charter from the shipping-merchants, and paid them the value of the barque."

"I had seen your daughter and loved her, though I knew not who she was, and she was a mere child."

"I had sprung forward one day and saved her from being trampled upon by a runaway team—"

"Ha! that was you who did that gallant act?"

"Yes, Count Delorme, and I was nearly killed myself; but I had had hard knocks in my time, so pulled through all right, while she was saved."

"I saw her again, when she waited in the carriage for you, at the shipping-merchants', and so I determined to be your sailing-master."

"I recognized you, for we had met before."

"And where?"

"It matters not."

"I told you once that your face was familiar but I cannot recall where we have met."

"It matters not, Don— Ah! I beg pardon, I mean Count Delorme."

"You know why I came here, as master of the barque."

"You know that I again saved your daughter's life."

"You know that I love her, that I told her so, young as she then was, and under our agreement I went to match her fortune by winning one of my own."

"My barque was captured by a pirate, Captain Caspar."

"Ha! that man?"

"You know him then?"

"He was hanged some years ago!"

"So it was believed; but he is not dead."

"You know this?"

"Yes, as I know that he is now sailing under his Spanish flag, calling his schooner the Iron Don, and himself Captain Conrado, while he too has sued for your daughter's hand."

"Great God!"

"Don't feign surprise with me, Count Delorme, for you know all about Conrado."

"I know about him?"

"Yes, you know him to be a pirate, and not a Spanish officer; you know that he was not hanged, you know that you held out to him the same bait that you did to me, to match your daughter's fortune with two million dollars, and you would give your consent."

"I know this from one of his men whom he treated cruelly, and who deserted him."

"He came up to speak with his captain and he heard all, and so retired unseen by you or the captain."

"He hailed me from an island and I sent a boat to take him on board, for he had sprung overboard at night from the pirate's vessel, for he knew Caspar meant to kill him when he knew what he had heard."

"He told me all, and I know you pledged yourself to him, as you did to me, to save yourself, because you feared him, as you do me, as we hold a secret of yours it would not do to have known, for—"

"Hold! do not speak of it," cried the count.

"Well, let me tell you, as I intended, that Caspar captured my vessel, scuttled the barque, and forced me to serve as his lieutenant."

"He was crippled in vessel and crew, and we were taken by a cruiser, commanded by a dashing young naval officer by the name of Harvey."

"I would not give my name, and Caspar told that I was really a pirate."

"Somehow they half-way believed me that I was not, and sentencing him to the gallows, they sent me to prison for life."

"There I lay in my cell for three years before I could escape; but at last I did so, and those I aided proved treacherous, and I was set adrift in the sea."

"Nearly starved, I was picked up by Captain Caspar, who had again become commander of a fine schooner."

"He made me his first lieutenant and I accepted, hoping to win my fortune."

"But I went off on a mission, and, through one he set to watch me, I found out how treacherous he was."

"I had his spy hanged, and I found the means of getting yonder vessel."

"She is a good craft, I have an able crew, and in her I hope to carve out my fortune."

"But I came here to tell you that I was not dead, and that I hold you to your pledge, when I shall have won the requisite fortune."

"Your story is an interesting one, and you expect me to give my daughter to one who was a self-acknowledged convict, and who is now a pirate," mused the count.

"You know just what Caspar was, and yet you pledged your daughter to him."

"I will withdraw the pledge."

"You dare not."

"Sir?"

"You dare not."

"I dare do anything."

"You dare not cause Caspar to tell what he knew, this fearful secret, any more than you do me."

"Great God! I am in the power of you both."

"So it seems."

"You are not, then, in the Cartagenian service?"

"As surely as is Captain Caspar in the Spanish Navy."

"Then you are not."

"I did not say that I was."

"You sail under the flag."

"True; but flags lie, as faces do."

"And you wish me to promise my daughter to you?"

"I do."

"Go and find Caspar, the Corsair, bring him a prisoner in your vessel, hang him in full sight of me, out in the offing yonder, and I will."

"You assert this?"

"I do."

"And will keep your pledged word?"

"Yes."

"Swear it!"

"I do."

"I mean as far as you are concerned, for I would not force your beautiful daughter to be my wife."

"You are generous."

"You mean that as a sneer?"

"Oh, no, for I would ten thousand times rather give her to you than to that accursed wretch."

"Silence! there comes your daughter."

As Captain Duluth spoke, Queen came forward, having come to join her father, being surprised that he should not come to the mansion and bring his guest.

"Why, Captain Duluth!" and she extended her hands warmly toward the young sailor, for she had not forgotten that she owed to him her life, though she did not know that he it was who had also dragged her one day from before a runaway team, that would have dashed over her, for she had, in turning to fly, slipped and fallen almost beneath their feet.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"SAIL, HO!"

"My child, this is an unlooked-for pleasure, to see Captain Duluth," said the count.

"It is, indeed, father, and I am glad to welcome him to Cloudland Castle, for there was nothing here when he left us ashore, excepting rocks and trees."

"Yes, it is a remarkable change, and you might call it Eden Castle, for you have placed your home in the midst of Eden-like beauty," said Duluth.

"I have another surprise for you, Queen," said the count, as he seemed to suddenly have warmed toward the young sailor.

"And what is that, father?"

"You remember how we searched for the gentleman who saved your life in London, when you would have been trampled upon by the runaway team?"

"Can I ever forget it, father?"

"But what of the brave man, who was hurt, I remember, yet drove away, before I could thank him?"

"It was Captain Duluth."

"Then twice I owe you my life, Captain Duluth, and you may feel that my gratitude is heartfelt," and Queen spoke with deep feeling.

She had admired the young sailor greatly, from their first meeting on board the barque.

She had never understood him, for he was unfathomable.

He had never spoken of himself, never referred to himself, his home, his family, or any friendships of the past.

He had, in answer to an inquiry one day, simply replied:

"I am a Child of the Sea, Miss Delorme; old Neptune was my father, a mermaid was my mother; I sprung from the sea, and I hope to be buried in the ocean when I die."

More he would not say, even to her.

She remembered how he had saved her, even at the risk of his own life, the vessel, and all, by springing overboard after her, and supporting her in his strong arms, until a life-boat was lowered and picked them up.

Then, in that awful moment, when death stared them in the face, he had told her of his love.

He had told her that she was but a child, and

yet he loved her, and he had asked her to return that love.

She had replied that she knew not what love was, she admired him, liked him sincerely, and, in the future, if her father commanded it, she would be his wife.

As she spoke, so little did she care for him, as he wished her to, that she could not but almost wish she would drown rather than live for such a fate.

She feared him, but she did not love him.

She admired him as a friend, but that was all.

Now, after three years had passed, he had come back.

He was very handsome, very stern, very attractive, and yet she feared him still.

Why it was she did not know; but so it was that she dreaded him.

Now she found that he it was who had saved her in London, and twice she owed her life to him.

Had it been before she had met Henry Harvey, she might have felt that it was her duty to become the wife of Bianca Duluth, that she might love him, for she preferred him to either Preble Bainbridge or the man she believed to be Captain Conrado, a Spanish officer.

But she had met in Henry Harvey the one man of her life, the one being that she could love as she knew her heart was capable of loving.

She saw that the young sailor loved her, and she knew that he had come to Cloudland Castle to woo her.

Intuitively her woman nature told her this; but she felt pity alone for him, and meant to tell she could never love him.

He was very handsome, very noble-looking, and very fascinating; but another form arose before her vision, and Bianca Duluth could not come between.

Such were the thoughts that flashed through her mind as she stood there with him.

But hiding all feeling, she asked:

"And where have you been this long time, Captain Duluth?"

Count Delorme wondered how he would answer the question.

But the answer came frankly and honestly:

"I have been in prison, Miss Delorme, most of the time since I saw you last."

"In prison?" and Queen seemed amazed.

"Yes, I was captured after leaving here by a pirate, and in turn he was taken by Lieutenant Harvey of the—"

"Harvey?" and Queen blushed as she spoke the name.

"You know him, Miss Delorme?"

"Yes; he lives not very far from here, down the coast, but he is away now."

"So he captured the pirate?"

"Yes, and the outlaws swore I was a pirate, and I was sent to prison for life."

"I was guiltless and I escaped, and now I have yonder vessel with which to carve out my fortunes."

"Under the Cartagenian flag, I believe?" said Queen.

"Yes, miss, I fly, as you see, the colors of that young country," was the somewhat evasive reply— "Ah! there is a sail!" and the quick eye of the young sailor caught sight of a vessel coming along the coast.

Instantly the count turned his glass upon the strange sail, and cried:

"It is the Iron Don coming back again."

"Indeed! and you are the foe of Spain, Captain Duluth, as you are in the Cartagenian service?"

"Yes, Miss Delorme," and the sailor was narrowly watching the coming vessel.

"He has no pilot to come into the bay after you."

"He need not have any, for I shall put to sea and fight him in the offing, for yonder blue ocean is not large enough for the commander of yonder vessel and I both to sail over."

"You know him, then, Captain Duluth?"

"As a—"

"Why, Captain Duluth, I forgot to tell you how splendidly you ran your vessel into this bay," quickly said the count, and he gave the young sailor a warning look, which he understood as meaning not to tell Queen that the schooner was a pirate.

"I know this coast well, Count Delorme, as you have reason to remember when I brought you in here the night of the storm, and you believed it was an accident."

"I well remember it, sir."

"But, Captain Duluth, you did not tell me if you knew Captain Conrado, of yonder vessel?"

"Yes, as my enemy."

"Your enemy?"

"He flies the ensign of Spain, and over my deck floats the flag of Cartagena, Miss Delorme."

"Ah! yes, I see how you mean that he is your enemy; but come, father, dinner is ready, and Captain Duluth must join us."

Bianca Duluth glanced quickly toward the count to see if he seconded the invitation, which he promptly and warmly did with:

"Of course, Duluth, and I should have asked you in before; but the fact is, we live here in

Overlook Arbor so much, we deem it a part of the house, as it were.

"Oh, yes, you must dine with us, and see how I have made a garden out of a wilderness, a home out of a barren waste."

"I thank you, sir, and you also, Miss Delorme; but let me see how far off my foe is."

"You mean to fight him, then?"

"Certainly; but he will not be in the offing, with this breeze, under three hours, and I shall therefore have time to accept your kind invitation, so if you will pardon me I will hail my vessel and tell them to prepare for action, for our enemy is in sight."

Then, as Queen and the count nodded assent, he sent his voice down from the cliff, ringing like a bugle:

"Ho! the Gold Queen, ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir," came the answer from Elgin, who was the first officer.

"Our enemy is coming down the coast, but yet miles away."

"Have all ready to run out and meet him, as soon as I come on board."

"Ay, ay, sir," came the response, and then a cheer broke from the crew.

"Your men seem anxious to meet their enemy," said Queen.

"Yes, they are, and I hope they will do their duty."

"It seems fearful to think that you must go into action in a short time, perhaps to death, and certainly to see many of your brave men die."

"It is duty, Miss Delorme, and sailors are schooled to face death when it comes, let it be in whatever form it may," and the three started for the mansion as Duluth spoke.

As though he had no thoughts of the ordeal before him and was perfectly contented, the young sailor devoted himself to enjoyment, and he certainly was charmed with all he saw.

Seated opposite to Queen seemed to sharpen his appetite, and he enjoyed his dinner, drank her health in a glass of the count's sparkling wine, and made himself most entertaining indeed.

Suddenly he glanced out of the window, and said quietly:

"I see by the trees that the wind is freshening; so I must go aboard ship, as the enemy will be down upon me an hour sooner than I anticipated."

The meal had ended, and they were merely sitting at the table, dallying with their wine; but his words caused Queen to turn pale, for she felt that she was conversing with one who might be a dead man in a very short while.

If this thought was in the mind of the young officer, he did not show it, and chatted pleasantly as the count and Queen escorted him as far as the Overlook Arbor.

"You will have a grand view of the battle from here, Miss Delorme," he said.

"Ah, me! will I have the courage to witness it?"

"Certainly, for at this distance you do not see the bloodshed, you hear no groans, and cannot behold the effect of the fire, so it will be a fine sight; but see, the schooner comes bravely in," and bidding good-by to the count and Queen he turned to go.

"One moment, please, Duluth," said the count, starting after him.

"Well, sir?" and he paused.

"You are a brave fellow, and if you kill yonder villain I will stick to my agreement, if you can win Queen's love."

"Thank you, sir; I will try," was the earnest answer, and ten minutes after Duluth stood on the deck of his vessel, which was going out of the bay under a six-knot breeze, her men at quarters, all but her working sails furled and everything on board ready to meet Caspar the Corsair.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DUEL AT SEA.

THE schooner, which Bianca Duluth had called the Gold Queen, in honor of Queen Delorme, and his having to win a golden fortune to claim her, presented a very different appearance than what she did when lying hidden in that island retreat of her former commander.

She had been overhauled from keel to truck, painted throughout, her masts and spars scraped, new sails bent, new rigging set in a number of necessary cases, and her decks and bulwarks had been patched, where shot-marks had been visible.

In fact the Gold Queen was a handsome craft when fitted up.

A little broad of beam, perhaps, and a trifle heavy in model, but a craft that carried her guns well stood straight up under ordinary wind pressure, and was a fleet goer in light or heavy weather.

Her crew were good men, her armament light, but serviceable, and there was no reason why she should not make a formidable antagonist for any vessel of her tonnage and strength.

The Iron Don was indeed the vessel that was coming back, for Captain Caspar had heard of a large vessel-of-war being in the vicinity, and he feared there might be some dangerous complications arise, should he meet an American

cruiser, and, playing the part he was just then, he did not care to have such a thing occur.

So he learned from a fisherman where the cruiser was, and concluded to put back toward Cloudland Castle.

"If I can keep near the count, he can vouch for me as an old friend to any American naval officer, and that will make me all right."

"Now, that young Harvey has a good eye for a face, as he recognized in me a perfect likeness to Captain Caspar, that is myself, and had it not been for the count's guarantee, dead as he believed me to be, there would have been serious trouble."

"I do not wish to fight just now, but wait until I can get a chance to marry that lovely girl, if she consents, and she does not seem to be other than most generous toward me."

"If she refuses, why then I shall simply kidnap her, rob her father, as he deserves to be, of his gold as well as his daughter, and then set sail for other scenes."

"With Queen for my wife, and her father's money, I can afford to give up the life of a pirate, and she shall never know that I was other than I have represented myself."

So said the pirate to himself, and back toward Cloudland Castle he had his vessel headed.

He saw the elegant home, as he drew nearer, sailing along the coast, and his powerful glass showed him the count and Queen seated on the settee near Overlook Arbor.

But he was shut out by islands, from a complete view of the bay, and consequently he did not observe the Gold Queen on her way out to meet him.

"I must soon get up to Isle Haut Bay, for there will be some news of Duluth, I suppose, ere long."

"I feel that I placed a good spy on his track in that fellow Cordova, and if Duluth finds the yacht with the treasure, my man will soon make short work of him."

Deluded man! He little dreamed how thoroughly the tables had been turned upon his spy, through the confession of Elgin.

"If the treasure is found, then all is mine, and I'll turn this vessel over to Cordova to cruise in, and—"

"Sail ho!"

The cry startled Captain Caspar from his musings.

A wicked man, he was also a bold one.

His early life warped from good, he had quickly gone down-hill, until he became the worst of the bad.

He was treacherous, cruel, soured, and yet he loved fame, such as it was, and delighted in making men trouble.

He had good traits, but he smothered them.

He acted ill from impulse, and when meditating over a wrong he had done, he did all in his power to make it worse.

He had, as the reader knows, when a young man, given up the woman of his love to his brother.

It was a noble act, for he saw that his brother loved her to idolatry, and so he acted for his happiness.

But brooding on it afterward he came to regret his act, and it made him hateful toward his fellow-men.

Going to sea, he had aided in a mutiny, and it did not take him long to command where he had been subservient.

He had revisited his home years after, but all were gone from there that he had known, and so he buried the past, wiped the faces of those he had loved off from the tablet of his heart, and gave himself up to crime.

His meeting with his brother had been a strange one, and it had saved him from the gallows.

He was amazed to know that he had never married Cora Conrad, his old love, after all, but had hidden his unrequited love under the garb of a priest.

He had learned, too, that his lady-love had married Count Leon Delorme.

Count Leon Delorme he had met before, and hence he determined to use a secret he held against him to force him to obey his commands.

He took his escape at his brother's hands as a matter of course, and did not have a thought of him afterward, until he was recalled to him by Captain Duluth saying that he owed his escape from prison to Father Adolpho.

Why his brother had aided Duluth he could not guess, and he did not worry himself in trying to find out.

So it was that Captain Caspar had turned back, after hearing of the presence of an American vessel-of-war in his vicinity.

He was day-dreaming of Queen when the cry from the maintop aroused him to action.

"Whereaway, my man— Ah! I see her, just coming out from beyond that Haunted Island.

"My glass, boy."

A cabin-boy soon placed it in his hands, and the glass showed him that he had a foe fully his equal in strength, crew and guns.

"By Neptune! but he flies the Cartagenian flag, and, with my Spanish ensign floating aloft, he will attack me as a foe."

So saying he turned to his first officer and or-

dered him to beat to quarters, at the same time keeping his eyes upon his enemy.

"He means to fight us, and we'll make him regret his rashness," he said to his officers.

"Who can he be?" he asked, as the vessel drew near.

"I cannot understand his being in that bay, and flying that flag."

"If he was an American I would not wonder at it but he has pulled down his flag."

"There goes another, sir, in its place," cried an officer.

Captain Caspar seized his glass, for the new flag had a disagreeable look to him.

"It is a red field, and a black gallows upon it—he knows me," he said, hastily.

The two vessels were now about half a mile apart in a straight line, but the Gold Queen, to get out of the bay, had to pass between the Two Sentinels, as the entrance islands were called.

Toward this pass she was heading, and after being hidden a moment by Big Sentinel Island, she came into full view, put her helm to the starboard, and came directly toward the pirate, who had not swerved from her course.

"Now, Miss Delorme and her father will see what I do with my enemies," said Captain Caspar, in his usual vain manner; and he was about to order a shot thrown across the bow of the Gold Queen, when that craft luffed suddenly and poured a broadside from her guns.

It took the pirate by surprise, though he was ready for action, for it showed that his enemy meant to fight in earnest.

A piece of rigging was cut here, a sail torn there, the deck was splintered by a shot, and a seaman had his head cut off—such was the result on board of the schooner of Duluth's fire.

"Luff, helmsman!—luff sharp, and give him our return compliments.

"At the guns, there!

"Fire!"

The loud voice of the pirate rung out over the waters, and his order was quickly obeyed, the schooner sending in a well-aimed shot upon the Gold Queen.

The damage done was considerable; but Duluth luffed sharp, and made his gunners pour in another fire, and this was more effective.

The fight now had become general, for the two schooners were not very far apart and nearing each other rapidly.

Standing upon the cliff were Count Delorme and his daughter, watching the affair closely.

Queen had suggested going to the mansion before the fight had begun, but the moment the cannon opened she had become chained to the spot, as it were, and fascinated, looked on.

She marked every move, noted the effect of every shot, and listened to the criticisms of her father most anxiously.

"By Heavens! but the craft of Duluth is getting the worst of it!" cried the count.

"It seems so, father; but how strange that we should stand here and see our friends thus engaged in deadly conflict!"

"Our friends?"

"Are they not such, sir?"

"Ah, yes, so they are; but see! that broadside settles Duluth, and the pirates are boarding him."

"Pirates, sir?"

"Ah! yes, I mean the Spaniards; but see! there comes another vessel," and Count Delorme pointed down the coast to a sail that was coming rapidly toward the scene of conflict, every particle of canvas set that would draw.

"Hark to that desperate fighting on the deck of the schooner!"

"It is appalling," cried Queen.

"Ay, it is music that I love to hear."

"But see! I believe that Duluth is conquered, for down comes his flag."

"Ay, listen to those cheers! they tell the story."

"No, sir, the fight still rages fiercely! see! they surge backward on the schooner's deck!"

"True! but it was a dying effort, and all ended now, my child, and Conrado is the victor."

"See, father! that is Henry Harvey's vessel coming!" and Queen pointed to the strange sail.

"By Heaven, but you are right, child," and behold! Conrado flies and leaves his prize! and as the count spoke the pirate vessel swung loose from her prize and crowded on canvas in rapid flight.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BACK TO LIFE.

WHEN Congo raised the shrouded form in his strong arms and bore him rapidly away from the scene of conflict, he did so because he had found that he was not dead, as he had supposed.

The character of the African was a strange one.

He was true as steel to a friend, or a master, and equally as true in carrying out his revenge, or a combat with a foe.

He had been surprised to find upon the island a human being, one who looked indeed like a specter, for, what he had known of the place in the past, he was aware that all shunned it as they did a spot that was accursed.

With no atom of fear in his composition, he

had at once determined to try conclusions with the ghost, or whatever it was, and though he met one strangely near his match, he had, in the end, proven the victor.

When he was rested, and again gazed into the face of the man who lay prone upon the ground, the moonlight shining full upon him, he saw that he was alive, and so he hastened to bear him away to the schooner.

Placing him in his boat he soon rowed out to the little vessel in the chasm, and getting on board entered the cabin.

He quickly placed the wounded man upon a sofa, and began to look to his wounds and dress them.

But it seemed that the brain of the man was wandering, as he came to his senses, and he spoke of scenes of the past, rather than dwell upon the present.

As tenderly as a woman could have done, as skillfully as a surgeon, Congo dressed the wounds, for he had all on the yacht that was needed for the purpose, and made the poor man most comfortable.

"Who is he?"

This question Congo asked himself over and over again, and yet he could give no satisfactory answer to it.

"I have seen him before; but where?"

This question also remained unanswered.

"This white hair, this snowy beard does not seem to belong to the face," and Congo mused as he gazed upon the stranger, in vain striving to recall from a past that was buried, where it was that he had met the one who lay so helpless before him.

When the eyes of the wounded man rested upon the black face, it was not with a start, as Congo had supposed it would be.

There was no recognition however in the look, only a wild stare, or a far-away expression as though intellect had fled.

"Now just be quiet, master, for you are badly hurt, and I will take good care of you," said Congo in a strangely soft and musical voice.

It seemed to impress the man, for his eyes closed, he smiled faintly, and sank to sleep.

Thus the days passed, and the strange man's wounds healed rapidly, only his brain yet wandered.

Congo was untiring in his nursing, caring for him day and night, and doing all he could to bring his former foe back to life and health.

The wandering language still showed delirium, or a mind that had lost its balance; but still Congo determined to do all he could to aid his patient to regain his reason.

"If he lives, and is sane once more, he can be my master, and the riches I have here will let us go where we will," he said, as he sat in the cabin one night, untiring, while his patient slept.

"If he dies," he continued, "or is mad, why I will not leave him to die, but see that he is cared for in some asylum."

"Then I will be free to search for one whom I would be so happy to serve."

"He was my young master once, and he treated me so kindly, and woe was it to me the day I was taken from him."

"He was poor, but he had the world before him, and he may have won a name by now, for he was so brave, so handsome and true a boy, he could not but prove to be a great man."

"I shall slip away from this island some night, go to the old home, and learn all I can about him."

"As for my first master, he who saved my life in Africa, and took me to England with him, I know not what became of him."

"I searched for him far and wide, when I escaped from those wicked men who took me to prison, but I knew not where he went, and—"

Congo stopped suddenly, for from the lips of the wounded man, lying upon the sofa, there came in deep tones, words in a strange tongue:

"Inahillaahoewah inahillihee raageeoon!"*

Instantly Congo was upon his feet, gazing at the man lying prone before him, and from the negro's lips came the words in the same strange tongue:

"Alham dceleelah rallah Kareem!"†

"Ah! who speaks? I had uttered words in a tongue I had not heard for long, long years; not since I was with the army in Africa."

"Those were gallant days, and although I ran off from my home as a boy, after my father married again, a woman I hated, and who hated me, and I enlisted as a common soldier, I was working my way up rapidly."

"It all comes back to me now, and how I was a long time a prisoner to the Arabs, and escaped from them one night, taking with me that young African chief, Yusef, whom they meant to torture to death."

"Poor Yusef! I wonder what became of him, and if he still lives?"

The patient had lain with his eyes closed while he had spoken.

He had awaked quietly, and perhaps dreaming of his soldier days, when a young officer in

* Verily to God we belong, and verily to Him we return.

† Praise be to God! Our Lord is bountiful!

the English army in Africa, he had uttered the prayer he had learned there.

Like an ebony statue, Congo stood gazing at him, and his whole form trembled with some internal emotion.

Again did the white man repeat the words:

"Poor Yusef, where can he be, I wonder?"

"Here, master!"

The answer was in the black's deep voice, and the white man started and opened his eyes.

He gazed at the deck overhead, at the cabin, and then at the negro, while he said:

"Why, Yusef, I have had such a long, strange dream, and here I am lying wounded in the cabin of the ship that bears us to England."

"Yes, master."

"Yusef, I dreamed that we had returned to England, and when I bore the dispatches to the commander-in-chief, he promoted me for my gallantry, and gave me a furlough, telling me to go home and get well."

"I dreamp't that he had a beautiful daughter, and that I loved her at first sight, and that she loved me; but her father frowned against my love, I being only a young officer of low rank, and he separated us."

"But we were secretly married, and I was forced to resign and seek safety in flight from persecution, for they sought to take my bride from me."

"You went with me, good Yusef, in my dream; but soon you were taken from me, and I never saw you more."

"Then our little child was stolen from us, and my wife and I sought a home in the New World of America."

"We sailed on a plague ship, as it turned out, and we were put ashore with others upon a desolate island."

"All died, my wife included, but I lived on, and I dreamed that my mind was lost, my head became wild, and I went mad."

"Since then my dream seems unreal and confused, and now, after seeming long, long years of mental anguish, I awake to find you by my side, and that we are on our way to England with my dispatches from the general in Africa."

"But is the ship in port, Yusef, for she is so still?"

As the man spoke the African had drawn nearer and nearer to him, and, as he ceased he sunk down in a crouching attitude by his side, while he grasped his hand.

"Master," he said in his deep, musical voice:

"Do you recall how you were captured one day by the wild tribes, and made a prisoner?"

"Yes, Yusef."

"Do you remember that you found in their camp a foe, whom they meant to torture to death, one of a rival tribe?"

"Yes."

"Do you recall how that prisoner, myself, had been much in your soldiers' camps, as a friendly chief, and spoke your language, and how you talked with him, freed his bonds, and aided him to escape?"

"Of course, Yusef, I recall all this."

"Then you took me with you, we beat back our foes, lay for days in the jungles, but at last reached your camp and were safe."

"My people had been annihilated, and I became your slave—"

"My friend and companion, good Yusef."

"In one sense, yes, master; but also your slave, and you carried me to England with you, and you met there the lady you married, and—"

"But, Yusef, we have not yet arrived in England."

"Master, your dream, as you called it, was not a dream, but reality, only all these years have seemed like a fearful dream to you."

"See! your hair is white, your beard is white, and you have passed through all you deemed a dream, for I was stolen from you, as your child was, and I found you here on this island where you have dwelt for years alone."

"Great God! am I dreaming now, awake, or mad?"

"Master, you are not dreaming, you are awake, and you are not mad, though your brain has been wandering."

"I have had strange adventures, too, since we parted, for I have served other masters, my last being a pirate chief."

"We were wrecked on an island of the Bahamas, with a vast treasure; but he sailed from there in a small boat, with his crew, left me to guard the booty, and he never came back for it."

"Years passed, and at last a vessel appeared; it was this little craft."

"I saw them land, from my hiding-place, before them find the treasure, and I slipped on board, hid in yonder state-room, which was vacant, and then we sailed."

"I heard the plot of the crew to get rid of the man who had told them of the treasure, who had enriched them, and they set him adrift in an open boat."

"Then, in my costume, that caused me to look like Satan, I went on deck at night, and the guilty wretches sprung into the sea."

"Thus was I alone on this yacht, with the treasure."

"Daylight came, and, strange to say, I held land I knew, this island, and in a storm I headed for it."

"I ran into the basin where the yacht now lies, landed, and met you, and we fought for our lives."

"I believed that I had killed you, but found out I had not soon after, and I brought you here."

"Now, master, you know all, and that all is not a dream, but a reality, and that we have met again, and I can give to you a king's riches."

Without a word the white man listened to the strange story.

He realized that it was not a dream, but a reality through which he had passed, and reason gradually came back into his brain with full power.

When the black had finished, he stretched forth his hand and grasping that of Congo, or rather Yusef, as he had known him, said:

"How strange is all this, my friend; but now we live for the future, and what it will bring to us."

"We have strangely met again, good Yusef, and I am a little bewildered now, though I have my reason once more, and we will not part again."

"No, master," was the fervent response of the African.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A BATTLE FOR REVENGE.

AFTER his duel with the pirate chief, Duluth quickly began work to get the schooner to sea, for he was most anxious to keep his rendezvous with Captain Caspar at Isle Haut Bay.

Of course it would be a different kind of engagement from what Caspar the Corsair expected, as he had no idea that his first officer and intended victim would come to meet him on equal terms, comparatively; but it was just such a meeting as Duluth desired, and was glad of the opportunity of having.

The schooner was most thoroughly overhauled from truck to keel; new sails were made and bent on, new spars set, and every part of the schooner was put in perfect condition and fighting trim.

The crew were daily drilled at the guns, in boarding, repelling boarders, setting sail, taking it in, and all that was necessary to make them thorough in their work when the need should come for thoroughness.

Then it was that Duluth set sail, and, needing certain things yet, he ran down off Portland, and taking his smaller vessel, went into the harbor by night and made his purchases.

To get rid of the little vessel then was easy work, for she sold readily, and feeling ready then for the contest he intended to bring on, he sailed slowly up the coast, floating above his decks the flag of the Cartagenians, in whose service he had once been.

As he was anxious to know all that had happened to Count Delorme, and especially to Queen, in the years that had passed since he had left them on the shores of Maine, he determined to sail to the spot where they had landed, and, as he had ample time on his hands before meeting Caspar the Corsair, to discover for himself if the count had kept his pledge to him, or given his daughter to another.

Turning to his first officer, as he came in view of the elegant mansion on the cliff, he said:

"Senor, wonderful changes have taken place here since last I saw yonder coast."

"A fishing-hut here and there were all to be seen then, but now yonder rises a seeming palace, and my glass shows me beautiful grounds about it, a handsome summer-house upon the cliff, a stairway to the beach below, and half a dozen small pleasure craft lying at anchor there."

"You know the place well then, captain?"

"Oh, yes; for my boyhood was passed about here, and these waters I can sail over the darkest night, for I learned them well in those days."

And for a long time did Duluth gaze upon the changed scene as he neared the shores, his face looking strangely sad, as though bygone memories cut him to the heart.

At last, as the schooner moved in toward Big Sentinel Island, his lieutenant said as he approached him:

"Those look like ugly waters ahead of us, sir."

"Yes, they are."

"Shall we put off the coast now, sir, for we are getting well in?"

"No; I shall visit yonder home."

"How shall we head, sir, for rocks, reefs and islands seem upon all sides ahead of us."

"I will take the helm myself in a few moments," was the reply.

And still Duluth watched the shores earnestly, until, as Big Sentinel Island loomed up ahead, he stepped to the wheel and said:

"Helmsman, I will relieve you, for it requires a good pilot to run into this bay."

"I should think so, sir, and a cool head and strong nerve as well," replied the helmsman, as he politely saluted and yielded the wheel to his commander.

With a manner that seemed indifferent to recklessness, considering the dangers about them

Duluth ran his vessel through the circuitous channel and the dangers of the bay.

He at last luffed up for an anchorage, and, entering his cabin was absent a short while.

Upon his return on deck he wore a uniform which he had purchased in Portland, and had had the ship's tailor to improve it to suit himself and he certainly looked exceedingly handsome in it, and a man to win a fair maiden's admiration.

A boat, by his orders, already awaited him, and he was rowed ashore, where he met Count Leon Delorme and Queen, from whom he had parted a little more than three years before.

It was a strange meeting, indeed, for then he had been master of the barque that had brought them to that very spot, and he had, in parting, sued for the maiden's hand, and been told that he must match her fortune with his own to claim her.

He had determined to do so, for he knew where he could secure such riches; but how bitter had been his lot, since he had sailed away from that bay.

Captured by a pirate, he had been sworn to be such by Caspar the Corsair, and condemned to life imprisonment.

He had been a convict for three long years, escaped, recovered his riches, been treacherously robbed of them, set adrift in an open boat, and nearly died, while his rescue from death he owed to his old enemy, Caspar the Corsair.

That enemy had still been treacherous, and meant him ill; but fortune was again favoring and he was on an armed deck, the Cartagenian flag floating above him, his crew true and brave and soon he would have his battle for revenge with the pirate who had sought his destruction.

If Queen was yet unmarried, he had hope, for he had the means of wealth at his command, and did he capture Caspar the Corsair, he would gain riches, and do the entire world a good service, in ridding the seas of the cruel outlaw.

Such were the thoughts that crowded upon him, as he sought the count in his grand American home, and his heart throbbed with joy, as he found that Queen was yet unwedded.

Thus it was, with a glad heart, he sailed to meet and fight Caspar the Corsair, the pretended Spanish officer, Captain Conrado of the schooner-of-war Iron Don.

As the vessels came in full view, Duluth determined it should be a battle of revenge, and to the death, with the eyes of Queen Delorme gazing upon him from the Overlook Arbor, and he so told his crew.

Nearer and nearer the schooners drew, and Caspar the Corsair, as he first beheld the flag of the Cartagenian, whom as an enemy of Spain, he was forced, under his disguise, to fight, felt relieved that he had not to meet an American cruiser, of all which he stood in dread.

But, after the first shots were fired, he saw the Cartagenian flag come down from the peak, and in its place went up a red field with a black gallows upon it.

This amazed him, and he could not understand it.

But he was in for a battle, and with a craft that certainly appeared to be nearly his equal in tonnage, guns and crew, and he too, knowing that the eyes of Queen Delorme were upon him, determined that it should be a battle to the death.

As the schooners neared each other, Captain Caspar uttered an exclamation of amazement, followed by a bitter oath.

He had been gazing through his glass, and had recognized Bianca Duluth, his intended victim, standing upon the quarter-deck of his adversary.

A second careful observation proved to him that Duluth was the commander of the schooner and he shouted out:

"Lads, yonder craft is commanded by my traitor lieutenant."

"He found the treasure yacht, fitted out yonder vessel, and means to destroy us and get the booty we have earned."

"Let this be a fight for revenge, and remember, he has over two million dollars on that vessel, and it is yours if you do your duty."

"Now fight like the devils you are!"

The words of Caspar were received with yells of commingled hatred and delight, and loud pealed the guns as they were turned upon the other schooner.

Duluth was a man to fear, and Caspar the Corsair did dread him as a foe, as well as a rival.

He saw at once, and none knew better than he, who had fought a hundred battles, how to judge, that Duluth was handling his vessel splendidly, firing slowly, and keeping his crew well in hand.

"I must board him and crush him by weight and desperate fighting," he muttered, and at once the schooner was put away for the other vessel, while loud rung out the Corsair's cry:

"Boarders, ahoy!"

The reckless outlaws, maddened by the combat, and wild with the anticipation of gaining the vast treasure which their chief had led them to believe Duluth had found and had on board, gathered about Caspar with desperate determination.

The fight now became very fierce, and soon after, amid the discharge of cannon, the rattle of musketry and pistols, the shrieks of the mad-dened pirates, and the cheers of defiance of Duluth's crew, the two vessels came together with a crash.

Then Caspar led his men upon the deck of his enemy, and hot and savage raged the fight, the pirates forcing their adversaries back along the vessel until they stood their ground on the quarter-deck.

"Here, men, we must fight for life or death!" shouted Duluth, and he sought to reach the side of the pirate leader.

"Give way, and let me face yonder traitor!" yelled Caspar, and, as he was not at once heeded, he brought his sword down upon one of his own men who barred his way.

Instantly a space was cleared, and Duluth met him more than half-way.

"Let the victor between us end this fight, Caspar," he said sternly.

"So be it, Sir Traitor! The victor takes both vessels and the treasure!" and Caspar forced the fight at once.

Then began a desperate sword duel between the two men, the pirate fighting for hatred of his rival, for revenge upon one he deemed a traitor, though he himself had been the traitor, and to kill a rival he feared, while he anticipated gaining a vast treasure by his capture, or death, and to win favor in the eyes of Queen Delorme, whom he had seen, with his glass, viewing the combat from Overlook Arbor.

As for Duluth, he fought to free the seas of a desperate outlaw, for revenge for the past, and to save Queen from ruin, while also he sought to win her greater regard for his victory, and gain the wealth in part that he must have to be able to claim her as his wife.

With such aims at stake with both, it was not to be wondered at that the fight was savage in the extreme.

But, splendid swordsman though he was, Caspar, the Corsair, made the discovery that he had met his match, if not his superior, while, as he reached this most unwelcome conclusion, there rung out in chorus the cry:

"Sail, ho!"

Quickly both men glanced in the direction from whence the stranger came, and beheld a schooner-of-war, crowded with sail, rushing toward the scene of combat.

"The American schooner Blue Blazes!" shouted a voice.

Then Caspar, the Corsair, turned livid, for he knew all that he had to fear, and he made a desperate lunge at Duluth.

But it was skillfully parried, and with a dexterous movement of his sword, Duluth disarmed his adversary, and said sternly:

"You are my prisoner, Caspar, the Corsair!"

"Never, sir!"

As he uttered the words, Caspar drew a pistol, and leveling it at Duluth, pulled the trigger.

With a groan Duluth sunk in his tracks, while Caspar turned, and bounding upon the bulwarks of the schooner, called to his men to follow him.

They were only too eager to do so, with the schooner-of-war rushing toward them, and leaving their wounded comrades upon the deck of their foe, they boarded their own craft, sent loose the grapnels, and the two vessels swung apart.

All sail was at once crowded upon the pirate, and she went flying away, while the Blue Blazes stood toward the other vessel.

Had Henry Harvey known that the flying vessel was not the pretended Iron Don, of Spain, but instead the schooner of Caspar, the Corsair, he would have left Duluth to his fate and given chase to the pirate.

But, not knowing this, he stood down to the vessel of Duluth, found him severely wounded, and heard the words:

"Don't mind me, Captain Harvey, for yonder vessel is commanded by Caspar, the Corsair."

Then Henry Harvey recognized the man whom he had tried to save from life-imprisonment, and heard in a few words his story, and that, as boys, they had often met.

"You shall go to my home, Duluth, where my mother will care for you, and remain there until you hear from me, for I shall throw a prize crew on board your schooner and send her to Boston.

"Now I go to chase yonder pirate," and so saying Henry Harvey quickly made the necessary arrangements to carry out his plans, after which the Blue Blazes went flying away in the wake of the Corsair schooner.

CHAPTER XL.

AN UNEXPECTED PRIZE.

CASPAR, THE CORSAIR, had fully a league, or more, start of the Blue Blazes, and was improving his good fortune all he could by crowding on sail to escape.

He knew, when he saw the cruiser, that he could not hope to longer deceive Henry Harvey with the story that he was Captain Conrado of the Spanish Navy, for the truth would come out, and so he had decided to run for it.

Had it been any one else than Henry Harvey, he would have fought him, even against great odds, but that young officer had before been his

captor, and he knew there would be no escape for him this time, if he was defeated.

So he ran for it, as fast as his schooner could carry him.

The schooner, however, was not in the best of trim, for she had suffered in the fight with Duluth.

Her foretopmast was cut away, her sails were full of shot-holes, and she was otherwise crippled, though not seriously, while a leak seemed to be gaining ground rapidly.

But Caspar was a man to subdue difficulties and misfortune, if man could do it, and he tossed his dead overboard, bundled the wounded below decks, and sent every man to his duty.

The schooner sped along well under the circumstances; but, when the cruiser had gotten well on in chase, it was seen that she was gaining.

"Night will help us, for we can dodge him, if we can only keep a half-league between us until night sets in," said Caspar to his lieutenant.

"We can run ashore and escape, as a last resort at least," said that officer.

"Yes; but I never desert my ship until I can do nothing else; he has put a ship's crew on that traitor's schooner, and given her orders to go to Boston, doubtless; so, if we can dodge the cruiser, we may yet double round and capture the other craft."

"You are a bold man indeed, Captain Caspar, to plot such a daring thing in the midst of such desperate danger," said the officer, admiringly.

And so the pirate held on, while the Blue Blazes came surging along like the wind itself.

Their course lay rather along the coast, than seaward, and, as Henry Harvey stood upon the deck of his vessel, looking at the chase, the lookout shouted:

"Sail ho!"

"We will overhaul the schooner, sure, and by night," said Henry Harvey, as he turned to glance at the new sail.

He saw inshore, apparently hiding away in a bay, a brig, and alongside of her lay a small craft.

"There is mischief yonder, sir," said an officer.

"It looks so, surely, for that fellow may be a coast buccaneer," and Harvey turned his glass upon the two vessels.

They were side by side, and men were visible transferring boxes from the brig to the smaller vessel.

"The brig is a foreigner, and the little fellow is a pirate; I verily believe, we must look to them, and pursue the schooner afterward, for I feel we can capture him too, if we are not detained."

So Henry Harvey gave the order to stand into the bay, and, as he did so it was evident that the schooner had just been discovered by those on the decks of the other two vessels.

There was visible great excitement on board, and a few moments after the brig and the lugger swung apart.

A shot across the brig's bows had no effect, to bring her to, and so a second was fired, and then a third, the latter cutting off her bowsprit.

Then she came to, and running down to her Henry Harvey threw a boat's crew on board to take possession, for he saw now that she had been delivering smuggled goods to the smaller vessel.

"Take her into Boston," he ordered the middy he sent in charge, and then the Blue Blazes put away in pursuit of the lugger.

Contrary to her looks that vessel was sailing away at a remarkably rapid rate, and with all her canvas spread was surprising those on the schooner.

"She belies her looks, sir," said an officer.

"She does, indeed, for she sails like a witch; but we'll overhaul her, or drive her ashore on yonder point," returned Henry Harvey.

"The pirate is making the best of this diversion in his favor," the young officer said.

"Yes, but we must not let go a bird in hand to catch one in the bush, while I believe we can capture the pirate also, if not now, at another time."

"I think so, sir, but if we do not we will have done a good day's work."

"We certainly will—ah! that fellow is going through the cut yonder, knowing he can run out to sea between the reefs, and we draw too much to follow him."

"But a boat can, so lower away the long boat, and I'll take a score of men with me, besides the twelve oarsmen, and I'll show him a trick that will catch him."

"You keep the schooner headed seaward, Mr. Drew, and await me in the offing, while also you must not lose sight of Captain Caspar," and Henry Harvey spoke quickly, and in a voice that was very firm and distinct.

In five minutes more the Blue Blazes luffed sharp, the long-boat was let fall, and filled with men, and springing into the stern, Henry Harvey took the tiller.

He knew those waters well, and saw just where he could cut the lugger off by dashing up to a narrow neck of land between the two islands, and carrying his boat across.

This he accomplished in fine style, the men lifting the boat bodily, and bearing it the fifty feet across the neck of land.

Hidden by the island in their maneuvers, from the lugger's crew, they suddenly shot out upon her, under the full sweep of their oars, and instantly the smuggler went about, while there was visible great excitement on board.

"Fire on them and we'll escape!" shouted the voice of the skipper, and instantly a scattering fire was poured upon the boat.

"Fire!" and the order of Henry Harvey was instantly obeyed.

The helmsman of the lugger dropped dead, along with others, the craft luffed sharp, and before the skipper, who sprung to the helm, could get her again on her way, the long-boat was alongside, and, after a moment's resistance, the craft was a prize to the gallant boarders.

It was the Surprise, and the skipper, Captain Nick Noland, looked most crestfallen, for well he realized that he had not only to answer for smuggling, but for piracy, as he had fired upon the crew of an American vessel-of-war to resist capture.

Instantly the lugger was put out to sea, the long-boat in tow, and the Blue Blazes was joined in the offing; but darkness was now coming on, and with it, to the chagrin of Henry Harvey, a mist was stealing over the waters, and he knew that before long the pirate, now a league distant, would be shut out from sight.

And as the mist enveloped them, Caspar and his crew were wild with joy, for they knew that they had saved their necks from the gallows.

CHAPTER XLI.

HENRY HARVEY'S REPORT.

The Blue Blazes put into Boston with her prize, the Surprise accompanying her, and Captain Nick in the hold of the cruiser in irons, and bewailing his fate, while he wished he had not been tempted to go out of his legitimate voyages to gain money more rapidly.

But he had done so, and the end had come, and there was every prospect of his being hanged as a pirate for firing upon a United States cruiser.

"This is a bad box you've got us inter, cap'n," said one of his men who sat near him.

"I am in the same box, mate," was the reply.

"Fact, and the same rope is likely to hang us both; but that hain't not a bit of satisfaction to me."

"I'd rather live than be strung up with a gold chain," growled the man.

"I'm just your way of thinking, mate; but we made the venture together, and we lost."

"We were doing well, having little work and good pay, when the idea struck me we could better ourselves by a little smuggling, and so ran into bad luck," remarked the skipper.

"Can't your friend help us out?"

"Whose friend?"

"Why, yours!"

"I guess I haven't got any friends now," was the disconsolate remark.

"Why, who was putting up the money for us?"

"Ah! you mean Cap— But I must not mention his name."

"I mean the young man as gave you the job, down near Haunted Island, and paid you well for it."

"I know now, and maybe he can help us; but I had not thought of him."

"It's strange, for I has thought o' every one I ever knew, and every sin I ever committed."

"You'll sin no more, mates," said another of the prisoners.

"But Fred's idee are a good one, Cap, that you get the young man as paid fer work to help us now."

"Can he do it?" a fourth remarked.

"I'm thinking he hain't no ordinary pusson, I is, and maybe he kin git us out," added another of the crew.

"Who is he, captain?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Then, as he don't wish to be know'd, it shows he's somebody big; so just tackle him, Cap, to get us out, and talk sassy to him, so's to scare him inter it."

"Lads, I'm thinking he can do something for us, and I'll send for him and have him make the trial; but our case has to be handled very carefully, so don't speak of my friend any more, and I'll do what I can."

This promise of the skipper quieted his men, for they had faith in him.

The Blue Blazes had now run into port, and luffing sharp had come to anchor, the Surprise also anchoring near.

There was a boat putting off from the shore and heading for the schooner, and in it was one who recognized both vessels.

It was Captain Preble Bainbridge, and his face was pale, his look anxious, for he had sighted the Surprise in the wake of the schooner, and felt that something was wrong.

He, however, had to brazen out every trouble, and so he went out to the Blue Blazes.

Henry Harvey met him pleasantly at the gangway, and said:

"I was just going ashore with Uncle Cummings, captain, and to report to you the result of my cruise; but I am glad you have come out."

"Yes, I thought I would board you, and learn the news at once; but you have a prize, I see."

"Yes; it is a coaster I captured, smuggling in connection with a Canadian craft, and they made pirates of themselves by resisting."

"I boarded yonder craft in my boat and took her, while the Canadian ran for it; but I pursued in my schooner, and forced him to run ashore."

"His craft was wrecked, and some of his crew were drowned; but we got a good cargo out of her and brought that vessel in as a prize, while I have her men in irons, excepting several who were slain."

"You have done well; but is she a Yankee boat?"

"Oh, yes, and her crew Americans, so it will go hard with them."

"I will order them into the lockup ashore to await trial; but did you visit Cloudland Castle?"

"Oh, yes; and the count and Miss Delorme sent their remembrances to you."

"And Miss Delorme" Henry Harvey had added of his own accord, as he did not wish it to seem that Queen had not sent her regards when her father did.

"But I have another surprise for you, Captain Bainbridge, as well as to make to you a report."

"Indeed! What is it?"

"I have another prize coming, in charge of Midshipman Vane."

"Why, you have done well, indeed; but what is your prize?"

"A pirate craft—a large schooner, well-armed, and that was fitted out by a man whom I believed to be in prison."

"He now lies at my home, badly wounded, and, as there was no real charge against him, I left him without a guard, for he pledged himself to come to Boston when he was able to do so."

"A pirate's pledge?" sneered Bainbridge.

"He is no pirate in reality, though his life has been a strange one."

"He is a Maine boy, from that part of the coast where I live, and the son of an Episcopal clergyman."

"He preferred a boat to books, and ran off to sea because his father wished to make a minister of him."

"He was captured by pirates, he told me, but escaped, and for years knocked about the world."

"At last he became sailing-master for an English shipping-house, and he was captain of the barque that brought Count Delorme over to this country."

"Then he set sail, to get a cargo and return, but was overhauled by Caspar the Corsair, captured, and his barque scuttled."

"Soon after I captured, you will remember, Caspar the Corsair, and he swore that this man of whom I speak, Bianca Duluth, which is an assumed name, was one of his officers."

"Duluth denied it, but it had only weight enough to get him sent to prison for life, and as he would then tell me nothing about himself, I let him go, though I really did not believe him guilty."

"He remained in prison for three years, then made his escape, and was found at sea in an open boat, nearly dead, and, strange to say, by Caspar the Corsair."

"Why, Harvey, that man was hanged."

"So I thought; but he was not, for he made his escape, and the keeper of the prison substituted one of his crew in his place, and let him be hanged as Caspar, for he feared to let it be known that he had escaped."

"Then, by Heaven! that keeper shall suffer, for—"

"He is beyond all human punishment, Captain Bainbridge, for he is dead."

"Ah, that is too bad, for I would have been glad to make an example of him."

"He died some months ago, I believe; but to return to my story, Caspar escaped, and, after awhile got afloat again and in a good vessel he had built for him."

"It was while on a piratical cruise that he picked up the man Duluth, and nursing him back to strength at once made him an officer."

"Duluth was forced to accept the berth for awhile; but being sent off by Caspar in a small craft, he arranged a plot with his crew, of ten men, I believe, to capture Caspar."

"One of the men had been an officer on the vessel of the old pirate Morganza, of whom you have heard; but Morganza's vessel was in hiding, and badly crippled, and so he lay by waiting for more men and what he needed."

"Duluth got a large crew, purchased all that was needed and sailed for the island retreat, and old Morganza would have it that he must fight him if he wished to command."

"This Duluth did, and Morganza was killed."

"Good for Duluth," cried Bainbridge, greatly interested in the strange man's history.

"So Duluth fitted the vessel out, and using a commission he had, as captain of a privateer in the Cartagenian service, he raised that flag and started in pursuit of Caspar the Corsair."

"He had put into the bay, to visit Count Delorme, when Caspar came down the coast, and Duluth at once ran out to meet him."

"The fight was a short and sharp one, the schooner of Duluth being crippled, and his crew not being well trained as Caspar's."

"But he fought him bravely, beat him back off his decks twice, and though wounded met the pirate in a sword combat."

"It was during this that Duluth was wounded by Caspar, who, when disarmed, drew a pistol and shot him."

"Just then he caught sight of my schooner coming toward the scene under full pressure of sail, and boarding his own vessel he set off at full speed."

"I stopped to learn what I could from the crippled schooner, ordered it into the anchorage near my home, to repair, as they could go there without a pilot, and gave chase to the Corsair."

"But he was nimble-heeled, and night coming on outfooted me, so I was forced to give it up."

"I then returned to the schooner, heard Duluth's story, sent him ashore to my parents, as the wound was severe, and a storm might end his life, and then set sail for this port, leaving Midshipman Vane to follow with the schooner."

"I wish you to write out your report, Harvey, and I will submit it; but did you not run up to Cloudland Castle again?"

"No, but the count and Miss Delorme rode down to my home to learn the result of the combat, and, I may as well also report that Caspar, under the name of Captain Caspar Conrado, of the Spanish Navy, and commanding the schooner-of-war Iron Don, had run into the bay several times, and greatly deceived the count, who mistook him for the friend of that name, whom he had met years before."

"The scoundrel! what a daring fellow he is."

"He is indeed, and he deceived me, for I was presented to him by the count."

"He spoke with an accent, and when I told him he was the image of Caspar the Corsair, whom I then believed dead, he laughed and then told me he had frequently been mistaken for him."

"The vile wretch; but I hope you will yet capture him, Henry, and if you do you'll get your rank as captain, for you will deserve it."

"Now, write your report, when you can, and bring it to me to-night."

"I see that the admiral is ready to go ashore, so we will join him," and walking up to the old gentleman, Preble Bainbridge greeted him pleasantly, asked about his visit, and showed no ill-will at having been left out of the will because he was a trifle wild.

CHAPTER XLII. BROUGHT TO TERMS.

THE return of Henry Harvey, with the report he had to make, made him the "lion" of the town, and *feasted* by the best families, and had more invitations than it was possible for him to accept.

The story of Duluth created a sensation, and a widespread interest in that strange person with a stranger career, and a pardon was given him for any sins he might have committed, as it was considered that he had certainly deeply suffered in his three years of prison life.

But while his schooner had come in, and was turned over as a prize of the Blue Blazes, the captain remained at the home of Henry Harvey, where Mrs. Harvey was his devoted nurse.

The crew were readily accepted as seamen upon other vessels, and thus were gotten rid of, while Elgin was made boatswain of Henry Harvey's vessel.

The smugglers were at once put in jail, to await their trial, and, as days passed and Preble Bainbridge did not visit them, Skipper Nick Noland sent a messenger to him, asking him to come to the prison.

Preble Bainbridge dared not disobey the summons, and so writing out a pass for himself under another name, and disguising himself as an attorney, he went and asked to see Nick Noland.

His pass admitted him, and he said sharply:

"Well, you wished to see me?"
"Certain, captain."
"What do you want with me?"

"I'm in jail."
"That is evident."
"So are my crew."
"Well?"

"We were caught smuggling."
"And resisted, so will be tried for pirates."
"That will hang us."
"I fear it will."

"You can help us."
"I paid you all due you, up to the time you thought you could make more smuggling."

"Fact, you paid us in gold."
"I can do no more."
"You owe us our lives."

"They will have to be forfeited, I think."
"I think not."
"Do you see any way out?"
"I do."
"How?"

"Through you."
"Through me?"

"Certain."

"I cannot help you."

"You can, Cap."

"I say I cannot."

"You mean you *will* not."

"Take it so if you *wish*."

"Would you see us swing?"

"It is not my fault if you do."

"It is."

"I say no."

"And I say yes."

"How do you make it so?"

"You took me away from other work, and put me into that which, in the end, brought me here."

"You should not have smuggled."

"I wanted more gold."

"You were too grasping."

"Never mind what I was, but see what I am."

"I can do nothing for you."

"See here, Cap, I know just what power you hold in this port, and you must use it."

"I cannot."

"All right, I shall send for that young officer who captured us so neatly, and who I will say is a gentleman clean through, and tell him how you put up the little game to have us kidnap the girl, and let you rescue her, so as you could win favor in her eyes."

"Sh!"

"No I won't 'sh! You know that would sound very bad, in this town, and where you are so well known, and you have not forgotten that you cost me a man's life that turn?"

"Great God! what do you wish me to do for you, man?" cried Preble Bainbridge, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Get us out of here."

"I don't see how it can be done."

"Can't you plot for us, as you could for yourself?"

"I know of no way."

"Then think up one, for if we are in here Sunday night next, I'll just give the whole game away about you."

The young captain stood in deep thought a moment, and then he said:

"I'll see what I can do for you, Noland."

"And my men?"

"They must take the consequences."

"They must not."

"None of them know me."

"I know you."

"And if I saved you, would you tell on me?"

"I would."

"You demand that I shall release all of you!"

"I do."

"I will get you out."

"Not a step will I go without my mates."

"Then stay!"

"Hold on, Cap, and don't git mad, for you are only chewing on your own tongue to spite me."

"Well?"

"We all go."

"I'll do what I can."

"Thank you, and don't delay, for every time I hear any nailing going on in the jail-yard, I think they are making a gallows."

Bainbridge laughed lightly, and asked.

"How many of you are here?"

"Six, all told."

"All right, I will do all I can," and if I fail you must take the consequences."

"And so must you."

"Not if I do my best."

"If I go up the gallows steps I'll make a speech about you, Cap, that you won't like, and I'll make it public."

With an oath Preble Bainbridge left the cell, and soon after he was in his office, busy devising some plan to aid the prisoners to escape.

At last he hit upon a plot, and said:

"If that man is not a villain he belies his looks."

Then he called in a sergeant of marines who was on duty outside of his quarters.

"Sergeant, I think I heard that your term of enlistment ended in a day or two?"

"Yes, sir, Saturday night."

"Will you re-enlist, sergeant?"

"Oh no, sir."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Go back to the old country, sir, and see my people, for I've saved up a few dollars, and won't have to go back as poor as I left my home."

"That is good; but will you remain there?"

"I guess so, sir, until my old mother dies, and then I'll get the little place for myself, and will sell it and come back to America, I'm thinking, sir!"

"Well, sergeant, if you will tell me just how much you have to go back with, perhaps I can tell you how to double it."

The man's eyes sparkled, and he said:

"Five hundred dollars, sir, when I am paid off."

"Well, sergeant, there is a vessel sails on Saturday night, and you can get your passage in her, and make it first-class, too, while I will pay for it for you."

"But I wish you to do one thing for me first."

"Yes, sir."

"I will give you a paper to take to the jail, and it will

charge a skipper, Nick Noland, and five of his men who are there."

"The pirates, sir?"

"Yes."

"You are to tell your men that Lieutenant Harvey gave you the written order, and you are to tell the prisoners simply that they are to be sent off for trial."

"There will be a small coaster off the East India wharf that night, and a boat will await you at the shore."

"Take the men on board and give them in care of the skipper."

"Yes, sir."

"You understand fully?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are to speak to no one about the affair, other than to tell your few men, who act as guard, that Lieutenant Harvey gave you your orders and the papers."

"Yes, sir, but I'll be discharged at sunset."

"All right, get four marines not on duty to go with you, and pay them a few dollars each."

"Here is the amount of your ticket, and here are five hundred dollars more, to add to what you have saved."

"Oh, captain!"

"Not a word, sir, but obey orders as I have given you."

"Then go on board the clipper ship and sail for home."

"She gets up anchor just about ten o'clock, so you will have ample time."

"I'll do it, sir, and thank you for your goodness," was the reply of the marine sergeant, who, when Saturday night came carried his orders out to the letter, and, while Nick Noland and his men escaped in a coaster, he set sail in a clipper ship, bound for Liverpool, to see the old folks at home, whom he had left long years before, to settle in the new land of America.

It is needless to say that he did his work so well, even to reporting to his men, that Henry Harvey gave him his orders, that Nick Noland and his crew escaped in a vessel which Preble Bainbridge had waiting for them, and thus saved their necks from the noose.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SPREADING THE NET.

THERE was certainly every reason to make a "lion" of Henry Harvey when he returned to Boston as the captor of a vessel, which, though not an acknowledged pirate, was yet a flagless cruiser, for Duluth had sailed for revenge and a fortune, both to be taken from Caspar, the Corsair.

Having formerly served in the Cartaginian Navy, and still holding his commission, he might perhaps have escaped the stigma of pirate, especially when he was hunting down the noted Caspar the Corsair.

It was taking this view of the matter, and to save a man who had been his boyhood friend, that Henry Harvey had sent him to his home to be nursed by his mother, hoping to arrange his pardon with the naval authorities in Boston.

The crew he had divided, shipping a number of them upon the Blue Blazes, so that when he had put his own men on board the schooner of Duluth, others as prize crews on the smuggling French brig, and the Surprise, he had his own force almost equally divided between Duluth's men and his own.

The loss of Caspar, the Corsair was a great disappointment to him, and yet, his going in with an armed schooner, the French brig, and the smuggler Surprise, was enough certainly to make a lion of him.

He was met by Captain Preble Bainbridge and warmly complimented upon his services, though that young officer was greatly annoyed at the capture of the Surprise, fearing it might prove unpleasant for him.

So great was the honor done Henry Harvey, that Preble Bainbridge felt that he was winning all the laurels, and would therefore gain still greater favor in the eyes of Queen Delorme.

Those high in authority in the naval command about Boston, accepted Henry Harvey's explanation of the position held by Duluth, and so paroled his crew to serve on the various vessels-of-war where they were needed, until the Government should decide fully regarding them, and Duluth was allowed to remain at the farm in Maine, Harvey making himself responsible for his appearance when needed.

The skipper, Nick Noland, and his men were sent to prison for trial as pirates, and the French brig was confiscated and her captain and crew ordered out of the country.

So stood matters soon after the return of Henry Harvey with his prizes, and while he was getting ready for a long cruise in search of Caspar, the Corsair, and putting his vessel and crew in trim for the desperate battle which he knew must come ere the sea outlaw could be taken.

But suddenly there seemed to be a coldness shown to the young hero, Henry Harvey.

What he had done no one could say, and yet there were rumors floating about.

No one could trace anything definite, no one knew the source from which they sprung; but the tangible thing heard was that Henry Harvey had to raise a certain sum of money, and that he was really in league with smugglers and

pirates, and had allowed Caspar the Corsair to escape.

To add to this story the semblance of truth, Captain Nick Noland and his smuggler crew escaped from prison, and it was said by the guard that Henry Harvey had ordered it.

Before this could be investigated, Henry Harvey, whose ears it at last reached, sought to find Captain Preble Bainbridge and place the matter before him.

He at last found him in a fashionable gambling saloon, one frequented by the wealthy young Bostonians, and army and navy officers, when the humor seized them to tempt the fickle Goddess of Fortune.

Preble Bainbridge was playing, and winning heavily, and so, in a recess of the game, Henry Harvey told him he would like to speak to him upon an important matter.

In a few words he told him of the rumors he had heard against his honor, and asked his advice as to what to do.

"Idle rumors, Henry, so do not mind them."

"But I do mind them, as here to-night I find I am treated with coldness."

"I have also heard rumors against you, but did not give them a second thought, as I felt that some one jealous of you, envious of your rising fame, was setting them afloat."

"I feel deeply pained, and I wish you would trace them for me."

"I will to-morrow."

"But the commodore goes to Philadelphia to-morrow, and I know that these rumors have reached his ears; and I called to-night, fearing he might carry papers against me; but he declined to see me, and so I came to you."

Just then the game was called, and Preble Bainbridge said:

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Henry."

"Well?"

"I am winning heavily, and I know you play a good game, little as you do play, and if you'll take my hand and play for me, I'll go to the commodore, have a talk with him, and come back here to join you."

"I seldom have ever staked money on cards, Bainbridge, and dislike to do it."

"But this is for me, merely playing for me, you know."

"Very well; I will do so, under the circumstances."

"Mr. Dealer, Lieutenant Harvey takes my hand, please, for I am called away," said Preble Bainbridge, and Henry Harvey stepped up to the table.

He was a good card-player, and played with nerve and rapidity, and he continued on in the luck with which Bainbridge had been playing.

The stakes gradually increased, but still Harvey won, but at last, when the stakes were remarkably high, he lost, and from that moment luck was against him.

Striving to regain for Preble Bainbridge his lost luck, he kept on, until at last the dealer told him he had played away the sum the captain had begun the game with, and lost heavily besides.

Henry Harvey had but little money with him, so was forced to give his I. O. U. for the sum of five thousand dollars.

Just then Preble Bainbridge returned and said that he had seen the commodore, and that serious charges had indeed been made against him, but that he hoped all would be well.

He ended by telling him that he had an order for him to run out into the bay the next day, to look up a smuggler.

"But I have lost, instead of won for you, Preble, and have a due bill of five thousand to pay at twelve o'clock to-day, for it is now nearly dawn."

"Give me the amount of the I. O. U., and I will arrange that for you, while you had better sail at once."

"And I will give you an I. O. U. for the sum, which is five thousand dollars," and Henry Harvey hastily wrote out the note, and then departed for his vessel.

It was a couple of days before he returned, and when he did he brought back as a prize a bay smuggler, which had long eluded capture.

But with this in his favor, Henry Harvey realized that somehow he was not honored, or trusted, and he at once, after making his report, sought the rooms of Preble Bainbridge.

"You have done splendidly, Henry, for that was a sly fox to catch; but it seems some one is at work against you, for rumors of all kinds fill the town," said Preble Bainbridge.

"I assure you that I am guiltless of doing any wrong act, Bainbridge," retorted Harry, deeply pained.

"So I know, my dear boy; but to show you how they talk, it is said you owe large gambling debts, that you let Duluth go, because he paid you; allowed Caspar the Corsair to escape because he gives you a certain tax, but seized the brig to get the price of the smuggled cargo, and brought Skipper Noland and his crew in as prisoners, as they would not pay you for their liberty."

"This is infamous!" and Harvey's voice quivered with emotion.

"I know it, Henry, and I'll try and so prove it; but you must keep quiet, and out of sight,

for Duluth is to be sent after and hanged, and your conduct is to be investigated."

"I only hope it will be."

"I went to your uncle, the old admiral, and he is furious, and says he will change his will to-morrow; it is now in your favor, you know, for he has had all these rumors taken to him."

"I do not doubt it; but what am I to do, Bainbridge?"

"Go to your quarters and await me there; but do not leave under any circumstances."

"I will do as you say," said the unhappy Harvey, and he left the rooms of Preble Bainbridge, the latter soon after putting on his hat and going out, his steps leading him toward a part of the town frequented by the lowest order of human beings.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE ASSASSIN.

THE old admiral sat alone in his elegant home, a decanter upon the table by his side, and some papers of an official character in his hand.

His face was white and stern, and it was evident that he suffered mentally.

Soon a servant in livery entered, and said:

"The attorney is here, sir."

"Show him in," was the blunt rejoinder.

A gentleman entered, with a kindly face, and one full of intelligence.

"Mr. Justin, I sent for you as I desire to rewrite my will," said the admiral.

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes."

"You are not satisfied with it then as it now is?"

"I am not."

"You will make it against your nephew—"

"Henry Harvey, yes."

"And in whose favor?"

"That of my other nephew, Preble Bainbridge."

"I am sorry, sir."

"And I am sorry that that boy's behavior caused me to change it."

"I doubted Preble at first, but he is after all the honest one, though wild."

"My dear admiral, you refer to the rumors you have heard against Harvey?"

"I do, and I know all, for only to-day did Preble bring me an I. O. U. he had paid, a gambling debt, for Henry Harvey, and more, he holds one himself from Harvey of twenty-five thousand dollars, and offered to destroy it, in his generosity toward his cousin."

"Admiral."

"Well, sir?"

"I admit appearances are sadly against Lieutenant Harvey, but I, with others, have been watching matters closely, and I believe he is the victim of a conspiracy."

"I do not believe he is guilty of what he is charged with, and I beg you to delay changing your will for a day or two, to give me time to ferret out who is his enemy."

"I have trouble with my heart, sir, and may die to-night."

"Perhaps so, as you say; but if you do, Harvey, if guilty, would never get your fortune, so I beg you to delay a few days, though of course, if you demand it, I will draw up your will anew."

The admiral was silent a moment, and then said:

"Justice, when a man with your wise head bids me hesitate, I obey, for you may be right, after all."

"I shall wait a few days, at least."

And so the good lawyer departed, while the admiral, after musing deeply for awhile, sunk to sleep in his easy-chair.

His valet came in to undress him, but seeing that he slept, knew he would not awaken for a couple of hours, for he knew his master's habits well, and so departed, to finish his flirtation with the chambermaid.

So an hour passed, and then the curtains over the window opening upon the piazza, were drawn softly aside, and a face peered in.

It was a masked face, and the eyes seemed fixed upon the sleeping admiral.

Then a man, enveloped in a cloak, entered, and it glided toward the admiral, who just then started, awoke, and springing to his feet, grasped the intruder.

There was a short struggle, the table was overturned, darkness followed, then came a heavy fall, a groan, an oath, and the rapid flight of a man from the window.

A moment after wheels were heard upon the gravel drive, while the valet dashed into the room.

Soon lights were brought, and the admiral was found, lying dead upon the floor, having been murdered.

Then into the room strode two officers in naval uniform.

One was Preble Bainbridge, the other the commodore of the port, and they had arrived in the carriage.

"See here! We came to urge the admiral not to change his will against Harvey, as we heard he intended doing, and these tell the story."

"They are his cloak, gloves and sword," and

the commodore held the articles up to the view of all.

"Great God! he is the assassin," cried Preble Bainbridge.

"If these blood-stained garments, this sword, speak for anything, he is, so be off at once, Bainbridge, and have him arrested," and the voice of the old sailor rung sternly, for he had at last begun to suspect Henry Harvey, where he had doubted before.

Springing into the carriage, Preble Bainbridge gave the driver an order, and the vehicle rolled rapidly away.

It halted at the quarters of Henry Harvey, and that young officer was pacing his rooms in deep and painful reverie.

"Quick, Henry, I have come to save you!" cried Bainbridge.

"Save me?"

"Yes; for you are doomed if you remain here."

"In God's name, what do you mean?"

"Your uncle, the admiral, has just been murdered, and the assassin wore your cloak and gloves, and carried your hood, and all are blood-stained."

"You know whether you are guilty of the deed or not; but I feel that you are innocent, and I am here to save you."

"The commodore and myself, hearing that the admiral meant to change his will against you, drove out there to ask him to wait, for we believed you to be a victim of an enemy, but we found him dead, and those things of yours in the room."

"The commodore ordered me to arrest you, but I wish to save you."

"If you fly, you can prove your innocence; but if you remain here and are thrown in prison, you cannot, and will suffer; so go, Henry, while I stay and do all to show you are not guilty."

Like a man dazed by a blow, Henry Harvey heard all, and remained gazing at Preble Bainbridge.

"Come, you must go with me, for I will not see you sacrificed."

"Come!"

He led him from the room down the stairs, rushed him into the carriage, and the driver drove swiftly to the harbor shore.

There a small sail-boat was secured, and still half-dazed by the shock, Henry Harvey went sailing off alone in the darkness, a fugitive, with the charge of a cruel murder resting upon him, to blight his life and his every hope of honor and of love.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE FALSE FRIEND.

AFTER the flight of Henry Harvey, Preble Bainbridge seemed outwardly a changed man.

He avoided the club, kept out of society, and when spoken to upon the subject, seemed to be deeply pained.

He frankly admitted that he had urged the young officer to fly for his life.

He saw that public opinion was so bitter against him, that it might break out into a mob and destroy him, and so he had told him to place himself in safety.

He did not believe that Henry Harvey was guilty of the murder of the admiral, and therefore he had wished him to keep away until the real murderer was found.

Then he could come back, and with flying colors claim his innocence; while if he stood trial then, in the heat of passion against him, he would most surely be hanged.

These things Preble Bainbridge did not deny, and he said it rather defiantly, that what he had done, had been in the belief of his kindred's innocence.

As for the inheritance he would receive by the death of the admiral, at the supposed hands of Henry Harvey, he did not care, as his father was worth far more, and he was his heir.

Such was said for the public ear, such was the face that Preble Bainbridge wore in public, when he was before his associates and officers.

But in secret his face was a different one, as the reader would have known, had he followed him to his elegant quarters in town after the flight of Henry Harvey and the burial of the old admiral.

Pacing up and down the room all alone, for he had dismissed his valet to be by himself, he said half aloud:

"So this is the way all this ends?

"I had not expected it to turn out quite so much in my favor."

"The death of the admiral I did not expect; but he held on so to that fellow I sent there to represent Harvey, that I suppose he had to kill him to get away."

"I am pained at this, for I did not wish murder, even to save myself."

"If Harvey was caught and sentenced to death, I fear I would come out and tell the truth."

"But love and debts will make a man do much, as I know."

"Now, I love Queen Delorme with my whole

soul, and now that Harvey is out of the question with her, she will marry me."

"But then, independent of her love, it was necessary for me to have her money."

"Here I am, the supposed heir of my father's vast wealth, when he knowing I would squander it, and to atone for some act of his in his youth, has secretly made his will, leaving all to charity, excepting a small sum to me."

"He does not know that I am aware of this, but I am glad that I read the will the day he left his iron box unlocked."

"So be it, with Queen's riches and Admiral Cummings's money, for I'll get that, with Harvey out of the way, I'll be rich as man can want."

"But I must act soon, for I cannot much longer carry the forged paper I have held on to for a year, renewing it with other forged paper, for the agent said the last time I took it up, that he was glad to get the interest, but was surprised my father had to thus borrow money."

"I must look to this, and my first move will be to win Queen over to a hasty marriage, and I guess the old count will be willing when I show him the forged deeds, papers, grants and other things I have, to make me seem to be worth two millions."

"As I must keep so glum here just now, I will take a run up to Cloudland Castle for a few days and arrange matters while there."

"I know that my seemingly friendly conduct toward Harvey will be appreciated by Queen, and my letter to her will gain me a better welcome than she gives me generally."

"Let me see: I'll take my own carriage and drive overland."

So having decided, the false friend ordered his carriage to be ready at a certain hour the following morning, and going to his office ashore, as port officer, and then on board his vessel, he arranged to be absent for a few weeks.

Starting on time, he rolled rapidly along through the country, and in good time drove up to the door of Cloudland Castle.

The count met him warmly, and said:

"What terrible news this is about poor Harvey!"

"It is indeed, sir, and it has made me positively ill; so I came up to visit you for awhile."

"You did right, Bainbridge, for you know you are always welcome here, while Queen feels that she has wronged you, after what you did for Harvey, and says she will frankly admit that you are a true and noble friend."

At dinner, an hour after, Preble Bainbridge met the heiress of Cloudland Castle, and she frankly extended a welcome, spoke of his letter to her about Henry Harvey, and said she had found herself mistaken regarding her opinion of him.

She was, however, very white-faced, sad-hearted, and showed deep traces of suffering, though she bore up bravely.

She said she knew that Henry Harvey was not guilty of murder, notwithstanding such damning appearances against him, and she never would believe it.

He might have been a little wild, but he was not bad, and if he had set those smugglers free and sent word to Duluth to fly when he was to be taken to Boston, it was because he had some good reason.

Preble Bainbridge agreed with her in every word, and did all he could to make her feel that Henry Harvey's misfortunes grieved him deeply.

And so well did he succeed that Queen turned to him as a near and dear friend in her sorrow; and she frankly admitted that she loved the fugitive officer; but, if she believed him guilty, she would have torn him from her heart if it killed her to do so.

And so matters went on at Cloudland Castle, those there little dreaming that a cloudburst was gathering that would sweep life and character before it; but such was the case, and dark clouds were looming up rapidly over some lives.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE DWELLERS ON THE ISLE.

WHEN Henry Harvey, against his own wishes but urged to do so by Preble Bainbridge, left Boston he was almost broken-hearted.

It seemed to him like a hideous nightmare, that he, above all others, should be accused of so many acts of wrong as he had been, and to crown all, be charged with the murder of the old man he had learned to love so well.

"I will yet solve it all, yes find out what it all means," he said, as he sailed along in his little boat, which cut through the waters at a rapid rate.

Preble Bainbridge had been anxious to have Henry Harvey go on horseback through the country, to escape; but no, he would not do that, for he had some motive of his own in view for refusing.

That motive revealed itself as he kept on his course.

By day he reached a point along the coast where he could hide, and he ran in the little yacht into a hiding-place.

But at dark he held on once more.

Thus he kept on, until the third night, when a bright light loomed up on his port-bow.

"Cloudland Castle! will I ever enter its hall in honor, freed of the accusations of crime now upon me?" he said to himself.

The moon was now rising in beauty, and he headed directly for the Haunted Island.

He passed the sentinels, and, running further out to sea, headed in for the breaks in the reefs, just as Congo had done.

Standing upon the shore watching him, were Congo and the cavalry officer.

The negro seemed deeply moved, as he saw the yacht head in through the reefs and said hoarsely:

"There is but one person other than myself that can run that channel, and I know of but one who would dare venture upon this island."

"Who is that, Congo?"

"The one whom you say came here the night I ran in, is the only one I believe would dare again come alone, whoever he is, while he whom I refer to as alone knowing the channels as I do, is Master Harry Harvey, of whom you heard me speak."

"Ah, yes; but see, he comes in rapidly."

"He does indeed, and we will do him no harm until we know who he is."

The yacht had now run in through the reef, and soon after dashed into the little basin where lay the schooner yacht.

What he saw was a surprise to Henry Harvey; but ere he could utter a word Congo appeared before him.

"Congo, as I live! for there is but one like you," cried the officer springing forward.

"Master Harry Harvey! grown as you are from boy to man, I know you now! I felt it was you, when you ran that channel," and the greeting was a warm one.

"You have not forgotten me then, Congo?"

"Forgotten the brave boy who saved my life, when those men were going to kill me as an Evil Being?"

"Did I not fly from them in a boat at sea, alone, at night, preferring to die thus?"

"And you saw my boat, saw that some one was in it, too weak to man it, and in a storm you ran out, took me in your boat, and saved my life, for I was nearly dead."

"And yet, after dwelling with us three years, Congo, you left us; left us just as I made a name for myself?"

"Master Harry, I was fishing one night, and a vessel came along and picked me up."

"It was a pirate craft, and the crew fought against me, saying I would bring ill-luck; but the captain stood by me, quelled the mutiny I had caused, and became my friend."

"I loved him devotedly for all he did; but I would have come back home, if I may so call it, but that our vessel sprung a leak, we had to take to our boats, with all our vast treasure, and getting a small vessel at an island put in the Bahamas, my master sought a safe hiding-place for the booty."

"We were wrecked upon the very same island; but he wished to have all, so left me to guard the treasure, while he took the men away in a boat that was there."

"He promised to return, within a year; but he never came, and I will tell you why I am here."

Then Congo told the whole story, up to the time of his having brought the soldier back from the grave as it were.

"And he was the White Specter?"

"Yes, Master Harvey."

"And you are the Black Hermit of the Isle?"

"Yes, sir, and I have a fortune here for you."

"Ah! Congo, I fear it has come too late," and Henry Harvey told the story of his life, and most deeply was the African interested in it.

"But let us go and meet the captain as I call him, for I left him to watch another sail that was following you pretty closely."

"Indeed! what was it?"

"A sloop, sir, and I saw but three men on board; but I have more to tell you, sir, for the captain and myself took a sail up the coast two nights ago, and there is a badly crippled pirate craft hiding away there, and it is the same I saw off this coast flying the Spanish flag."

"Caspar the Corsair!"

"Yes, sir, I guess so."

"We will see to him afterward; but hark! your friend calls."

They sprung into a boat and hastened ashore, to find the soldier, to whom Congo presented Harvey.

"The craft has run upon a reef and is going to pieces," said the soldier.

"Come, we must save the crew," cried Henry Harvey, and the three sprung into the boat and pulled for the wreck.

Two men were rescued, Harvey springing into the sea and saving one, and Congo the other, while a third had gone down, for the men had run the smack upon a sunken rock.

"Curley, it is you?" cried Henry Harvey, recognizing a sailor that he knew.

"Yes, sir, and I owe you my life, lieutenant, and I intend to make a confession to you, sir, for I left you in a bad way."

"A confession, Curley?"

"Yes, sir; the man who sunk was Dan Sloan, and you knew him, sir, and my mate here is Bowline Tom, sir, and we have wronged you, for we took gold from Captain Bainbridge to ruin you, sir."

"He set those smugglers free, sir, and laid it to you, to hurt you, for Sloan here was one of the marines as went after 'em to prison, and heard the captain's orders to the sergeant."

"Then, sir, we helped the captain spread reports against you, and Dan Sloan, sir, worse than all, dressed up in your clothes, took your weapons, and went to the admiral's house to rob him."

"The admiral saw him, fought with him, and he was killed, and you were accused, while the captain got us out of the way, for he wanted his uncle's money, and he wanted to marry your sweetheart, sir."

"Great God I thank Thee!" cried Henry Harvey.

Then he added:

"Can Preble Bainbridge be so base?"

"Yes, sir, he is all I say, and we can prove it, for now that Sloan is dead, who killed the admiral, me and Bowline owes our lives to you, and we'll stand by you."

"Curley, I did tell Duluth to hide, for he is not guilty, and he is at my home."

"To-night I will go there, get him, and there is a little work ahead of us which will gain pardon for you, I am sure, so you remain here with us, and we'll all put our heads together and get something out of all this that will honor us and, as Preble Bainbridge has done what he has, he must accept the alternative."

CHAPTER XLVII.

A STRANGE DENOUEMENT.

WHEN night came on, Henry Harvey went in his little yacht down the coast, accompanied by Congo and Curley, the soldier and Bowline remaining behind upon the island.

The destination of the little craft was the haven of the Harvey farm, and under a brisk breeze she sped along.

Landing, Henry Harvey went alone up to the house.

He looked into the window and beheld a sad old couple there, for they were grieving for their boy.

But he made himself known, and over the meeting we will let the curtain fall to shut out the public gaze.

An hour after, two persons left the house, one being Henry Harvey, the other Bianca Duluth, who had been in secret hiding in the old home since he had been sent word to keep out of sight.

"You will go back with flying colors, Duluth, for father will go at dawn from cot to cot along the coast, and get picked men, and my word for it we will gain our end, and make a sensation about it, too."

"But here we are at the boat, and—"

"Congo!" said Duluth, suddenly springing forward.

"Yes, I am Congo, and you are—yes, I know you now—you are he that was the bright boy Anchor we had with us on Don Brandon's schooner," and the two men wrung each other's hands warmly.

"Yes, I am Anchor, Congo, and I knew that the captain left you on the island secretly, and that the treasure was not lost; but he deserted the men too, left them to die, and afterward left me on a rock to perish; but a vessel came along and found me most dead, and thus I was saved."

"But it took me to foreign seas, and as I grew up I almost forgot about the treasure, and your being left there, and supposed Don Brandon had gotten it, until three years ago I accidentally found out that he had not yet gone after it, having already as much money as he could use."

Thus the two talked over the past, Congo telling his story, and when they arrived at the island, for the benefit of the soldier and Bowline it was talked all over again.

"How did you find out three years ago, Anchor, that the Don had not returned for his treasure?"

"Why I might as well tell the truth now, for it must come out I suppose."

"The fact is, I commanded the barque that brought Don Brandon, his servants and his daughter to this country."

"I knew him from the first, though he pretended to be a French exile, bearing the name of Count Leon Delorme."

"Great God!" and Henry Harvey sprung to his feet quivering with excitement.

"It is true, Lieutenant Harvey, as I can prove; but let me tell you that I know your secret well, for I have had it from your mother, and you need have no fear for Miss Queen, for she is not the daughter of Don Brandon the buccaneer."

"Thank Heaven for that!" cried Harvey.

"I found that out, by a paper left in the cabin of the barque by mistake."

"It gave the direction where to find a little

child, Queen by name, whose parents had run off and gotten married.

"One was a noble lady, the other an under officer in the English Army and the father of the maiden was determined to punish her."

"So he paid Don Brandon a large sum to steal her from her home in Scotland, and he did so, and, having married a lady of rank himself, under false pretenses and as Count Delorme, he thought to cheer her in her wretchedness, and so took her the child."

"Then it seems he went to sea again as a pirate, lost his vessel, while I was on with Congo here, and returning to England determined to lead the assumed life of a wealthy gentleman, for his wife was dead, and his adopted daughter was growing up very beautiful."

"There were those in England who knew him, and so he determined to come to America, and I brought him over, with the Lady Queen, his servants and furniture."

"I gave him a hint that I knew him, but he did not recognize me as the boy, Anchor, whom he had left on that rock in the sea, to die; but, sir, my story seems to move you deeply?" and Duluth turned to the soldier, who was very much moved.

"You called the little girl Queen?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You said she was kidnapped from her parents who lived in a cottage in Scotland?"

"Yes, sir."

"How old was she then?"

"The paper said three years."

"Did it give the name of her parents?"

"I have it here, sir," and he handed out a time-worn document, which he took from a leather wallet.

"Thank God, friends, that little Queen was my child, and she who dwells yonder, believing that man to be her father, *is my daughter*," and the white-haired man, aged before his time, fell his length upon the ground, while Henry Harvey and all sprung to his aid.

Soon he revived and said quickly:

"Joy nearly killed me, for I never expected one spark of it again."

"My child stolen, my wife sorrowing, compelled to seek a home far away from persecution seized with the plague aboard ship, and left here to die, my darling taken from me, my brain then unsettled, is it any wonder that I am overcome, when I find joy rush like an avalanche into my heart at finding my child?"

"Great God! let me go to her at once!" and the man sprung to his feet, quivering with excitement.

"No, there is no hurry now, and what is done must be done calmly."

"She believes the man her father, and loves him as such, so she must be undeceived in a way not to shock her."

"Then we have other work on hand for tonight, and it must be first attended to."

"When it is accomplished we will visit Cloudland Castle, no sign must be shown that we hold dire secrets, until I have an opportunity to speak with Captain Bainbridge alone first."

"Then I will tell him all I know; if he needs proof, you can appear, Curley and Bowline, and I will know what he will do."

"After that I will see Miss Delorme, and tell her as quietly as I can, in the presence of Captain Duluth here, just what we know regarding her parentage."

"I will tell her of her own father, and that he is near to welcome her."

"Then we will seize Don Brandon, and, as he sinned deeply, so must he suffer."

"Such is my plan," and Henry Harvey paused for comment.

"It is the right one, Lieutenant Harvey, and we will be governed by you in all things, I am sure," Duluth remarked, adding:

"My old parents live not very many miles from Cloudland Castle, and I will ask you to let them know that their truant boy is alive, as the shock might kill them did I suddenly go home."

"I have seen them, but they never saw me, as I kept out of their sight, dear old people."

All agreed that the lieutenant's plan should be carried out, and then they began to talk over an important affair that they had decided upon for the following night, and which will soon be made known.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CONCLUSION.

THREE days after the startling *denouement* on the Haunted Island, three persons were seated in Overlook Arbor, gazing in an interested way over the scene spread before them.

In the offing was a schooner, armed, and standing in toward the entrance between the islands known as the Big and Little Sentinels.

The trio in the Overlook were Count Leon Delorme, Queen, and Captain Preble Bainbridge, and all were watching the vessel closely through their glasses.

"It certainly is the craft of Caspar, the Corsair," said the count.

"I never saw his vessel, so cannot vouch for it, count," responded Bainbridge.

"But I have seen his schooner and will vouch for it; it has been badly used up, either in battle, or a storm; but it is his vessel," said Queen.

"I shall get guns and build a fort on this cliff, to command the entrance to the bay, for then I shall feel safe," the count remarked.

"Do you dread trouble from him now?"

"Yes, for why should he be coming here, when he knows his mask is torn off?"

"I only wish I had my vessel here to capture him."

"I wish so, too, Bainbridge; but see, he has a pilot on board, or he would never have passed through the Sentinels as he did."

And so they gazed at the approaching vessel, until suddenly Queen called out excitedly:

"See! that is Lieutenant Henry Harvey at the helm!"

"By Jove you are right; in some way he has captured Caspar, hoping to save himself, but alas! poor fellow, it will do him no good."

"And I see Duluth!" cried Queen.

"Yes, and there are others grouped together, whom we cannot recognize," the count said.

Nor did they make out any one of this group, and the vessel dropped anchor, while the count, Queen and Bainbridge watched closely a boat put ashore.

It contained Harvey and Duluth, and in a short while they were at the arbor.

Queen sprung forward to greet them, but the count and Bainbridge hung back.

"Captain Bainbridge, I have to report, sir, that, with the aid of Captain Duluth, some two-score of brave coast fishermen, collected by my father, and others to aid me, I captured Caspar the Corsair last night, hiding in an island haven."

"I am anxious to have you go on board ship with me to meet the Corsair, for he is dying, having shot himself when he saw that all was lost."

So said Henry Harvey, and Bainbridge and the count could only acquiesce while the former said in a low tone:

"My poor Henry! you have done a gallant thing, but I fear it will do you no good."

Upon arriving on board, Harvey asked Captain Bainbridge to come first into the cabin with him, while Duluth took the count below to see Caspar.

Bainbridge followed, suspecting no wrong, and a few moments after he had heard how his victim knew the truth.

"You had better write your resignation, Bainbridge, and I will bear it to Boston, while you seek safety in flight."

"I will, Harvey, I will, and Heaven bless you for allowing me to go," groaned the man.

Then Duluth led Don Brandon in heavily ironed, and Harvey said:

"Captain Bainbridge, that man is no exile, but the pirate, Don Brandon."

Going ashore then, Harvey was accompanied by the white-haired father of Queen.

Leaving him to slowly follow, Harry joined Queen in the arbor, and then he broke to her the sad story of her life.

She was deeply moved, but rose up bravely, and calling her father, Harvey walked apart, and the meeting between father and daughter was affecting in the extreme.

Two hours after, Bainbridge drove hastily away from Cloudland Castle, and where he went no one ever knew.

But the Iron Don set sail for Boston, having on board Don Brandon as a prisoner, and with Caspar, the Corsair dying below decks.

Queen remained at home, and her father stayed also, for the pirate chief before leaving transferred the vast estate to the one he had taught to believe that she was his child.

On the way to Boston Caspar died, and, asking to see him buried, Don Brandon was brought on deck, for once they had served together on the same pirate vessel.

As the body was launched into the sea, Don Brandon shouted out:

"Comrade Caspar, I follow thee!"

Then, before he could be checked, he leaped over the bulwarks, and, heavily-ironed as he was, went rapidly to the bottom.

Arriving in Boston, Henry Harvey proved his innocence, and the two men, Curley and Bowline were pardoned.

Then Harvey, accompanied by Duluth and Congo, started for Cloudland Castle, and they found Queen ready to leave, for neither she or her father would live there.

So they departed from the place in the yacht that had brought Harvey there, while Duluth returned to the home of his parents.

Congo accompanied Harvey, and the parents of the young sailor also returned with him to Boston, for Queen had promised to become the wife of the gallant officer.

And she kept her promise, and a happier couple never lived, for they devoted the treasure on the island, and Don Brandon's riches to charity alone, and two important characters in their home were Queen's father, and Congo, the Black Hermit of the Isle.

THE END.

B E A D L E ' S D I M E L I B R A R Y .

212 The Brazos Tigers. By Buckskin Sam.
213 The War Trail. By Capt. Mayne Reid.
214 The Two Cool Sports. By Wm. R. Eyster.
215 Parson Jim, King of the Cowboys. By Captain Frederick Whittaker.
216 The Corsair Planter; or, Driven to Doom. By Col. Prentiss Ingraham.
217 The Serpent of El Paso; or, Frontier Frank, the Scout of the Rio Grande. By Buckskin Sam.
218 The Wild Huntress; or, The Big Squatter's Vengeance. By Capt. Mayne Reid.
219 The Scorpion Brothers; or, Mad Tom's Mission. By Captain Mark Wilton.
220 The Specter Yacht. By Col. P. Ingraham.
221 Desperate Duke, the Guadalupe "Galoot." By Buckskin Sam.
222 Bill, the Blizzard. By Edward Willett.
223 Canyon Dave, the Man of the Mountain. By Captain Mark Wilton.
224 Black Beard, the Buccaneer; or, The Curse of the Coast. By Col. P. Ingraham.
225 Rocky Mountain Al. By Buckskin Sam.
226 The Mad Hussars; or, The O's and the Mac's. By Capt. F. Whittaker.
227 Buckshot Ben, the Man-Hunter of Idaho. By Capt. Mark Wilton.
228 The Maroon. By Capt. Mayne Reid.
229 Captain Cutsleeve; or, Touch-Me-Not, the Little Sport. By Wm. R. Eyster.
230 The Flying Dutchman of 1880; or, Who was Vanderdecken. By Capt. Whittaker.
231 The Kid Glove Miner; or, The Magic Doctor of Golden Gulch. By Col. Ingraham.
232 Orson Oxx, the Man of Iron; or, The River Mystery. By Isaac Hawks.
233 The Old Boy of Tombstone; or, Wagering a Life on a Card. By J. E. Badger.
234 The Hunters' Feast. By Capt. Mayne Reid.
235 Red Lightning, the Man of Chance. By Col. Prentiss Ingraham.
236 Champion Sam. By Col. T. H. Monstrey.
237 Long-Haired Max. By Capt. M. Wilton.
238 Hank Hound, the Crescent City Detective. By Anthony P. Morris.
239 The Terrible Trio. By Buckskin Sam.
240 A Cool Head; or, Orson Oxx in Peril. By Isaac Hawks.
241 Spitfire Saul, King of the Rustlers. By Jos. E. Badger, Jr.
242 The Fog Devil; or, The Skipper of the Flash. By Capt. Fred. Whittaker.
243 The Pilgrim Sharp. By Buffalo Bill.
244 Merciless Mart, the Man-Tiger of Missouri. By Buckskin Sam.
245 Barranca Bill, the Revolver Champion. By Captain Mark Wilton.
246 Queen Helen, the Amazon of the Overland. By Col. Prentiss Ingraham.
247 Alligator Ike; or, The Secret of the Everglade. By Capt. Fred. Whittaker.
248 Montana Nat, the Lion of Last Chance Camp. By Edward Willett.
249 Elephant Tom, of Durango; or, Your Gold-Dust or Your Life. By Jos. E. Badger, Jr.
250 The Rough Riders; or, Sharp-Eye, the Seminole Scourge. By Buckskin Sam.
251 Tiger Dick vs. Iron Despard; or, Every Man Has His Match. By P. S. Warne.
252 The Wall Street Blood; or, Tick Tick, the Telegraph Girl. By Albert W. Aiken.
253 A Yankee Cossack; or, The Queen of the Nihilists. By Capt. Frederick Whittaker.
254 Giant Jake, the Patrol of the Mountain. By Newton M. Curtis.
255 The Pirate Priest. By Col. P. Ingraham.
256 Double Dan, the Dastard; or, The Pirates of the Pecos. By Buckskin Sam.
257 Death-Trap Diggings; or, A Hard Man from 'Way Back. By Joseph E. Badger, Jr.
258 Bullet Head, the Colorado Bravo. By Captain Mark Wilton.
259 Cutlass and Cross. By Col. P. Ingraham.
260 The Masked Mystery. By A. P. Morris.
261 Black Sam, the Prairie Thunderbolt; or, The Bandit-Hunters. By Col. Jo Yards.
262 Fighting Tom, the Terror of the Toughs. By Col. Thomas Hoyer Monstrey.
263 Iron-Armed Abe, the Hunchback Destroyer. Captain Mark Wilton.
264 The Crooked Three. By Buckskin Sam.
265 Old Double-Sword; or, Pilots and Pilates. By Capt. Fred. Whittaker.
266 Leopard Luke, the King of Horse-Thieves. By Captain Mark Wilton.
267 The White Squaw. By Capt. Mayne Reid.
268 Magic Mike, the Man of Frills; or, Bad Ben's Bad Brigade. By William. R. Eyster.
269 The Bayon Bravo. By Buckskin Sam.
270 Andros, the Free Rover; or, The Pirate's Daughter. By Ned Buntline.
271 Stonefist, of Big Nugget Bend; or, Old Ketchum's Tug of War. By Capt. Mark Wilton.
272 Seth Slocum, Railroad Surveyor; or, The Secret of Sitting Bull. By Capt. F. Whittaker.
273 Mountain Mose, the Gorge Outlaw. By Buckskin Sam.
274 Flush Fred, the Mississippi Sport; or, Tough Times in Tennessee. By Ed. Willett.
275 The Smuggler Cutter. By J. D. Conroy.
276 Texas Chick, the Southwest Detective. By Captain Mark Wilton.
277 The Saucy Jane, Privateer. By Capt. Frederick Whittaker.
278 Hercules Goldspur, the Man of the Velvet Hand. By Captain Howard Holmes.
279 The Gold-Dragon. By Wm. H. Manning.
280 Black-Hoss Ben; or, Tiger Dick's Lone Hand. By Philip S. Warne.

281 The Sea Owl. By Col. Prentiss Ingraham.
282 The Merciless Marauders; or, Chapparal Carl's Revenge. By Buckskin Sam.
283 Sleek Sam, the Devil of the Mines; or, The Sons of the Fiery Cross. By Jos. E. Badger, Jr.
284 The Three Frigates; or, Old Ironsides' Revenge. By Capt. Fred. Whittaker.
285 Lightning Bolt, the Canyon Terror; or, The Mountain Cat's Grudge. By Mark Wilton.
286 Pistol Johnny. By Joseph E. Badger, Jr.
287 Dandy Dave and His Horse, White Stocking; or, Ducats or Death. By Buckskin Sam.
288 Electro Pete, the Man of Fire; or, The Wharf Rats of Locust Point. By A. P. Morris.
289 Flush Fred's Full Hand; or, Life and Strife in Louisiana. By Edward Willett.
290 The Lost Corvette; or, Blakeley's Last Cruise. By Capt. Fred. Whittaker.
291 Horseshoe Hank, the Man of Big Luck. By Capt. Mark Wilton.
292 Moke Horner, the Boss Roustabout. By Joseph E. Badger, Jr.
293 Stampede Steve. By Buckskin Sam.
294 Broadcloth Burt, the Denver Dandy. By Captain Howard Holmes.
295 Old Cross-Eye, the Maverick-Hunter. By Capt. Frederick Whittaker.
296 Duncan, the Sea-Diver; or, The Coast Vultures. By George St. George.
297 Colorado Rube, the Strong Arm of Hotspur City. By Wm. H. Manning.
298 Logger Lem; or, Life and Peril in the Pine Woods. By Edward Willett.
299 Three of a Kind. Tiger Dick, Iron Despard, and the Sportive Sport. By P. S. Warne.
300 A Sport in Spectacles. By Wm. R. Eyster.
301 Bowlder Bill; or, The Man from Taos. By Buckskin Sam.
302 Faro Saul, the Handsome Hercules; or, The Grip of Steel. By Joseph E. Badger, Jr.
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